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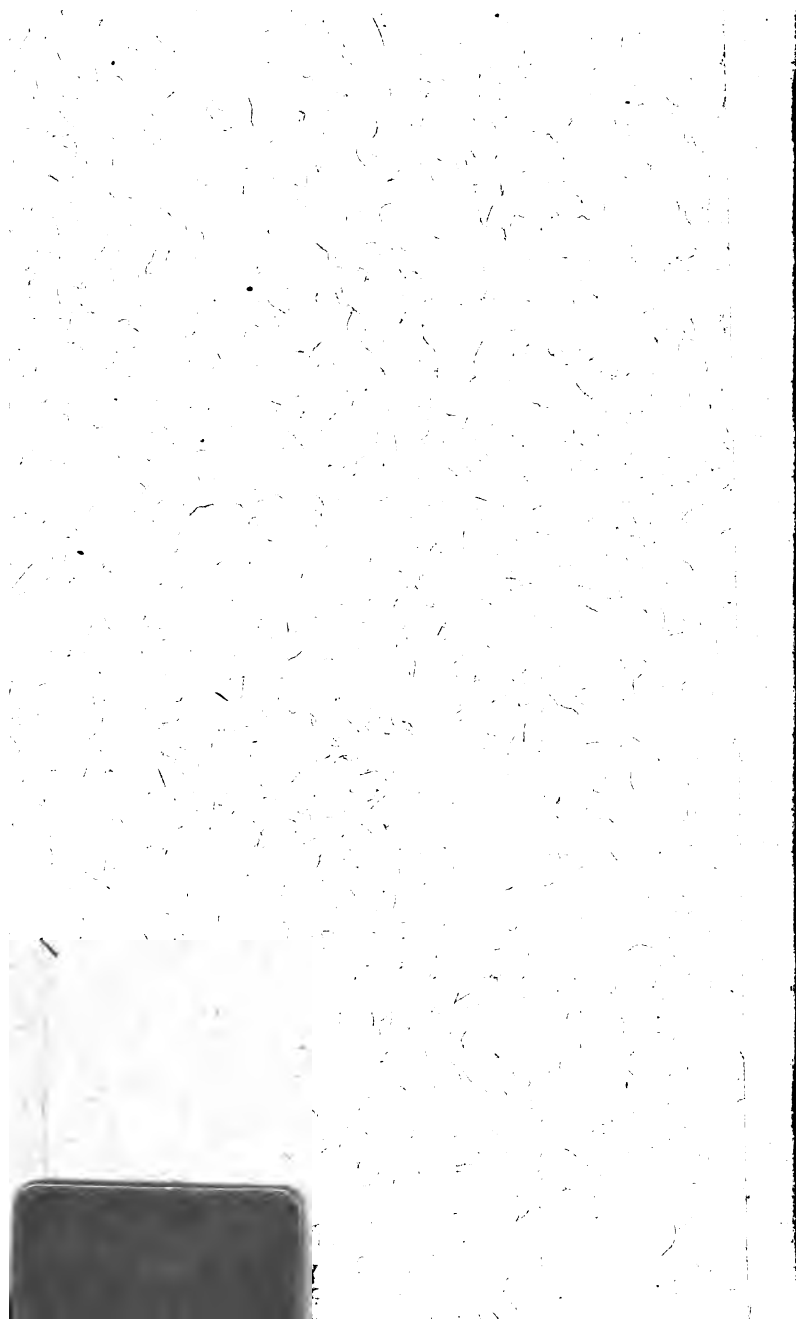
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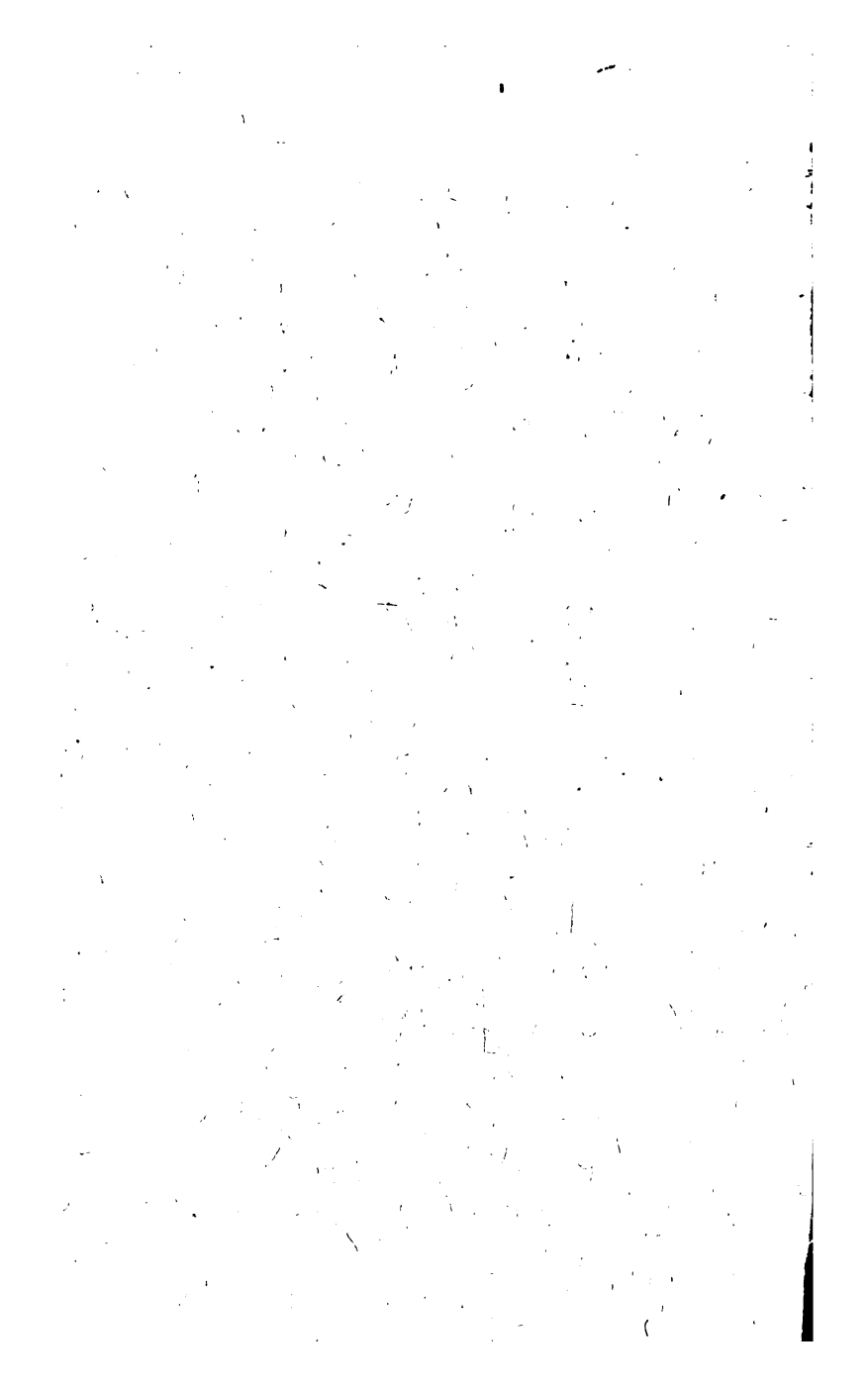
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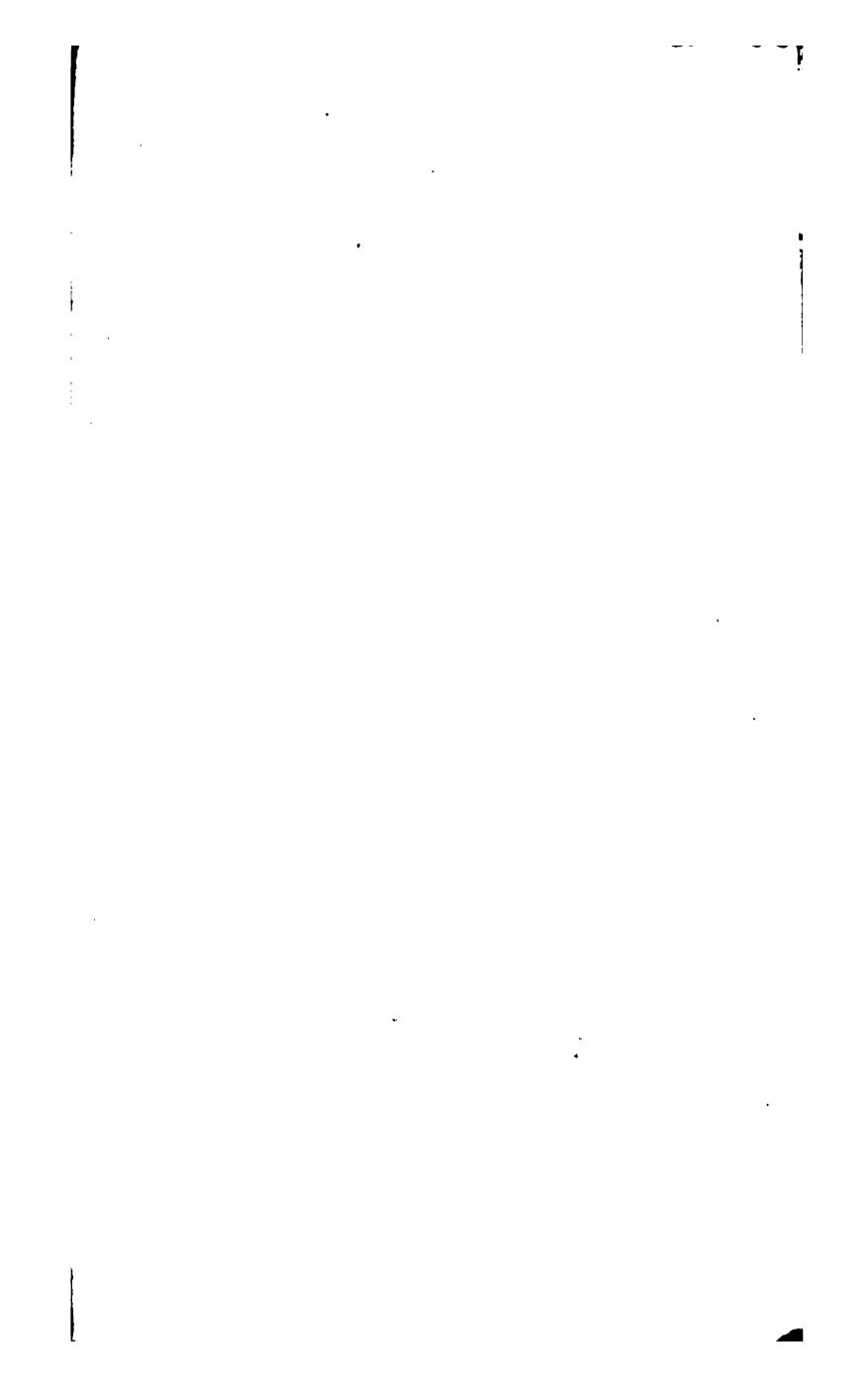
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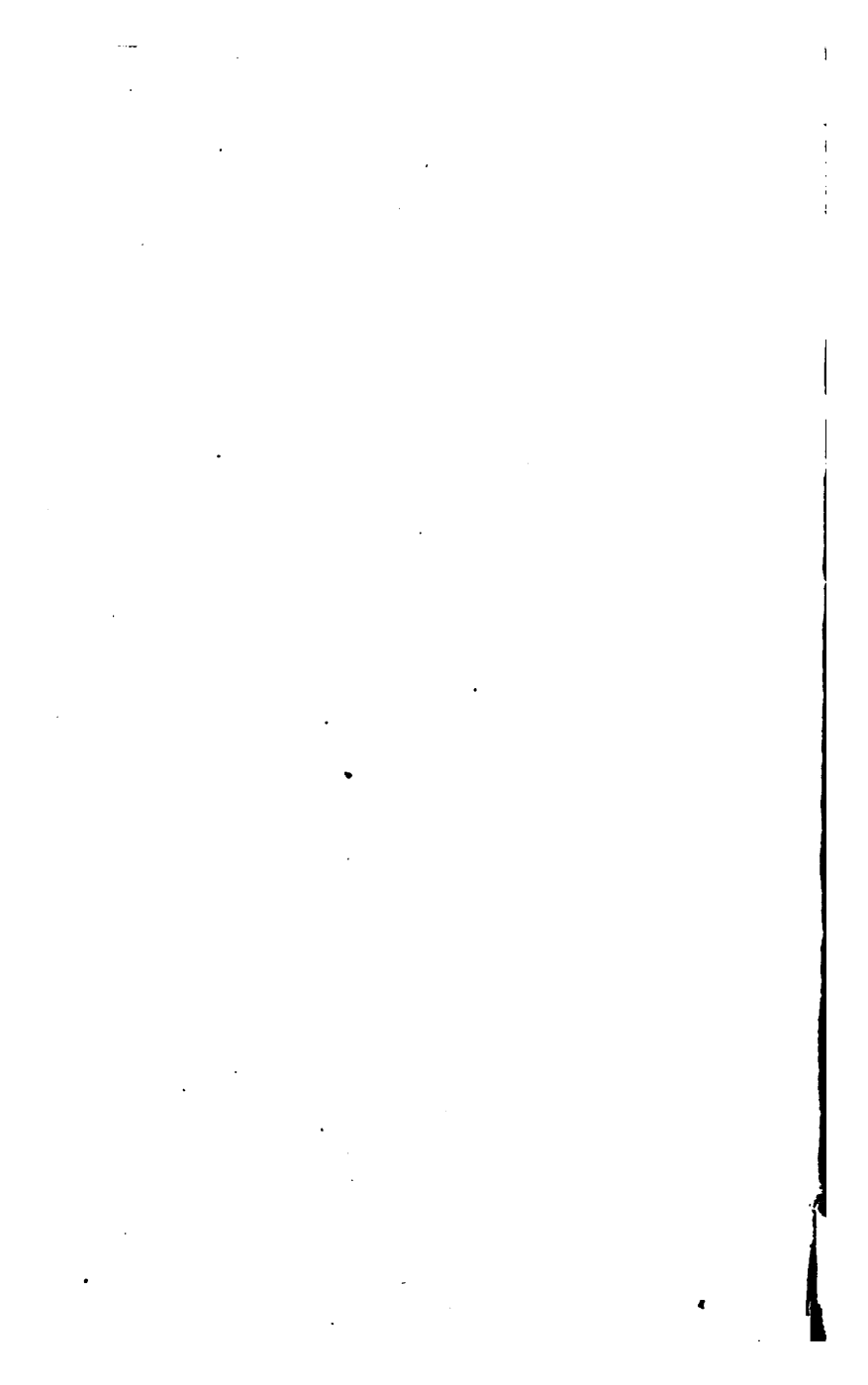


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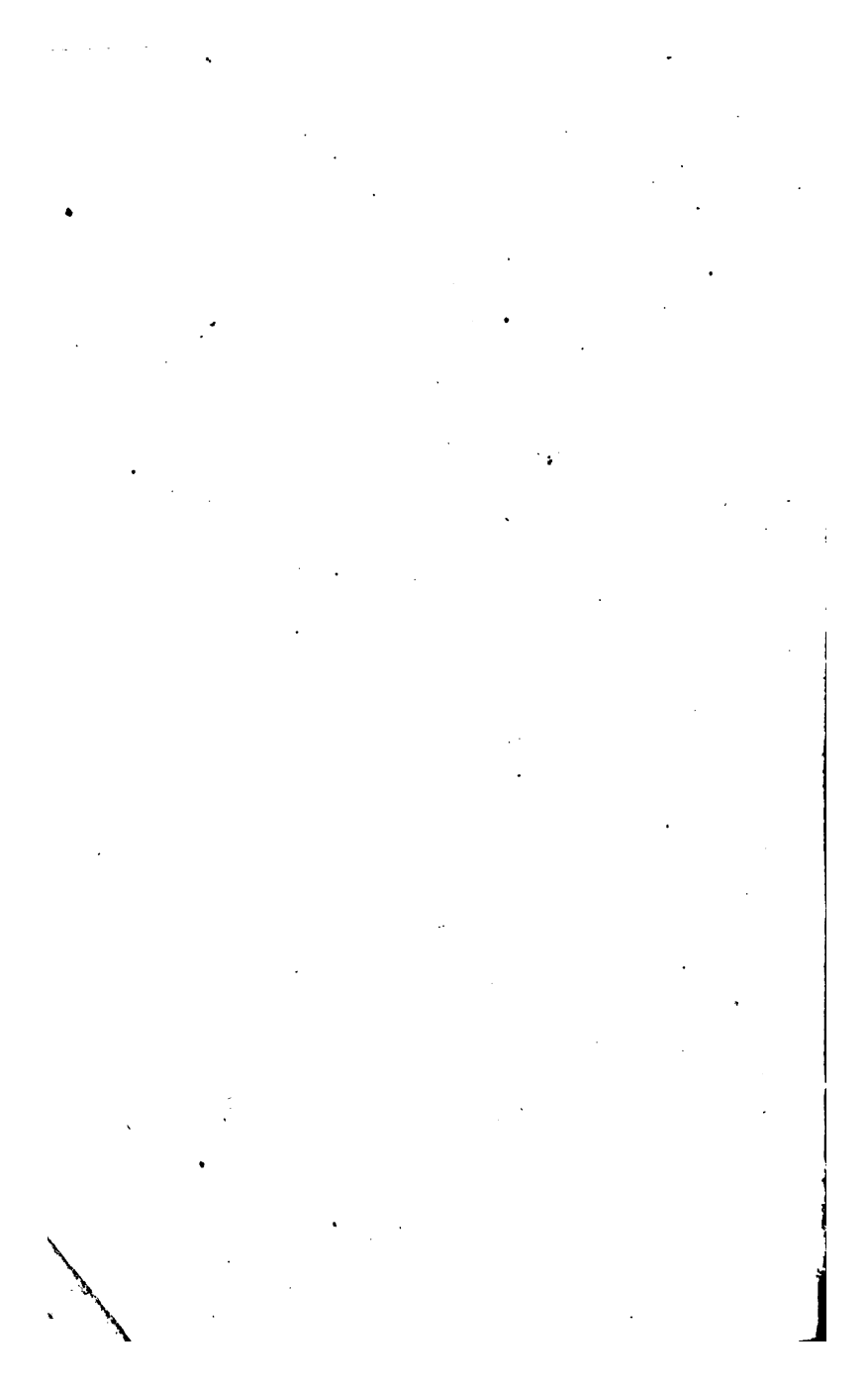






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ROUGH RECOLLECTIONS

OF

RAMBLES, ABROAD AND AT HOME.

BY

CALDER CAMPBELL.

Author of "THE PALMER'S LAST LESSON" etc.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

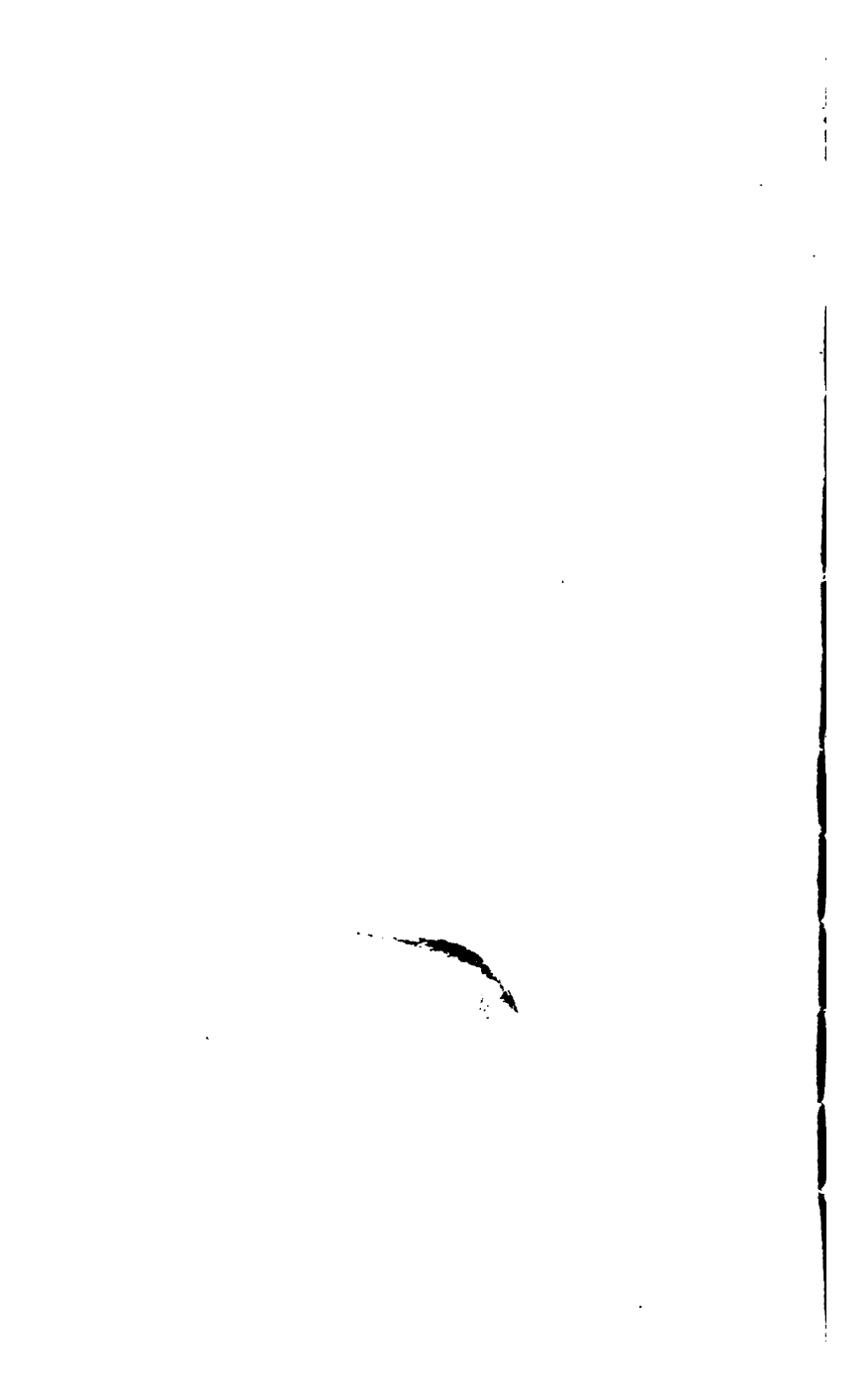
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To
MR. FREDERICK SHOBERL.
Editor of "THE FORGET ME NOT,"
These Volumes are inscribed,
By
His faithful friend and servant,
THE AUTHOR.

London, 1847.



ROUGH RECOLLECTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS—MY FIRST ADVENTURE—OLD WOMEN, NO. I.—THE HOWDIE WITCH OF CAWDOR.

THE title of my book will prepare him, whose kind intention it is to honor it with a perusal, for such ruggednesses of style as may be expected from the random recollections of a soldier, whose desultory habits both of thought and action have naturally tended to produce a series

VOL. I B

of unconnected adventures, rather than a coherent narrative. The facts, fancies, and events which have been, as it were, flung into the memory's casket, from the times of early boyhood, up to those when the head begins to gather grey hairs, are now taken forth almost without regard to date, or arrangement ; under the supposition that a more formal stringing together of the dissimilar braids of a fanciful rosary would only tend to destroy the truth that belongs to my title. It may suit me, now to rake up anecdotes of my schoolboy days, and anon revert to such scenes of my manhood as promise to afford interesting subjects for detail. I hope that the indulgent reader will accompany me as he would a wandering gipsy, who now leads him over the bleak upland, whence the rolling sea and the busy mart may be seen ; and then into the dense forest, where nature lieth

not supine among leafy labours : he must come with me, not considering me as a guide whose aim is to direct—but as a comrade whose desire is to divert.

It is not of the Future that I am likely to discourse ; though truly miserable must that man be who ceases to talk of it ! The Past shall be my principal field ; for, though our adoration of it is, alas ! too frequently our only consolation for the Present, it is the store on which all must fall back, who search for remembrances ; and, if I better love to take my scenes from the *HAS BEEN* than from the *Is*, I do so to spare myself the enumeration of evils, which could amuse nobody.

Solitude, which to the young is a season of dreams, of hope and joy, is too often to the old a time of repentance and of painful memories : surely it is wise to make it cheerful by throwing over it such light from the

past as may tenant its loneliness with the visionary array of pleasant things, long vanished !

The first seventeen years of my life were passed in an obscure part of the Highlands of Scotland, when all at once, that which had been the great ambition of my young desire—a privilege to wear scarlet and a sword—was granted me ; and, thanks to my kind hearted, much wronged kinsman, Admiral Sir Robert Calder, I was appointed a cadet of the Honorable East India Company. But glad as I was to quit my native hills—glad with that gladness which is not the exponent of ungenerous feelings, but the natural and praiseworthy impulse of the daring spirit at enfranchisement from domestic rules and scholastic regulations, I loved my native place with a deep love, that has outlived almost all the dear ones

who then inhabited it. One of my earliest adventures, occurring there a few years before I left it, may be entitled

THE HOWDIE WITCH OF CAWDOR.

In a romantic district of Scotland, near the ancient Castle of Cawdor, where, some years ago, the singularly-fashioned bedstead on which the royal Duncan is said to have received his deathstroke from the murderous dagger of the treacherous Thane, was consumed by an unlucky fire, had resided for many years, a withered beldame, called Eeshpal Gorm. My first recollections of her are somewhat vague,—merely presenting the forbidding appearance of a gaunt and ugly old woman, with long, unkempt elf-locks of grisly black, escaping from beneath an untidy *curch*, or coif; and with a huge scar,

or mark, of a deep blue colour, on one cheek from which, or probably from the blue cloak which generally formed her out-door covering, she derived her sobriquet of *Gorm* (Blue) ;—her avowed name being Hossack.

In the most mischievous caprices of my infantile passions, the warning—"Here comes Eeshpal Gorm !" instantly produced quiet and obedience ; but, as I approached manhood, a strange sort of interest—not free from a degree of superstitious terror—became mixed up with my meditations on the old woman. I learned that she had been long the lonely inmate of a gloomy *bothy*, or cabin, in one of the deepest and dreariest dingles of the Cawdor woods ; upwards of a mile from the village, and half that distance from any residence. She had first visited the hamlet of Calder, adjoining the castle, some thirty years before, as a

practitioner of the obstetric art ; but she was not a native of the place, neither had she any kindred or acquaintances there ; and both her dialect and her ignorance of the Gaelic, which is chiefly spoken by the peasantry in that part of Scotland, proclaimed her a native of the Lowlands. Her professional skill as a “wise woman,” does not appear to have been disputed ; but her success in procuring employment was not in proportion to her expectations.

Her appearance, sudden and unlooked for, at a place where she was utterly unknown,—her apparent want of connexion,—and her guarded and sour silence on all subjects touching her own affairs, coupled with her repelling countenance and manners, occasionally servile and obsequious, but more generally rude and disobliging, and if roused to anger, fierce and threatening, excited strong feelings

of aversion and suspicion in the bosoms of the many ; nor was it, unless in cases of desperate emergency, or in the deficiency of all other aid, that her services were called for by the good-wives of the country. It was however remarked that all persons of *no* character—the dissolute mothers of babes that claimed no ostensible, or, at least, no legal fathers, resorted freely to Eeshpal.

On suspicion grew suspicion. From the soil in which doubt was so plentifully sown sprang up aversion ; and superstition was not tardy in casting its stone on the gathering cairn of opprobrium. Eeshpal's maledictions had been known to produce evil fulfilments ; but her blessings—no one had ever heard them. Eeshpal's bothy, to which she had retreated on the death of the old fox-hunter who had occupied it for many years, was seldom approached by the decent

dames of the neighbourhood ; but a few had occasionally entered it, and it was always found oddly furnished with what the honest gossips thought had no business there. There were bunches of herbs and roots, dried or recently gathered, slung from the *cupples*, or rafters,—or carefully laid out on paper ; there were a few stuffed animals, too, of the very nature of which the housewives were ignorant ; there were glasses of quaint shape, and tins of rare forms—and what could she want with such things ?

On those visits she was usually found inside her cottage, arranging her weeds and roots, simmering up some nauseously-smelling decoction, or reading a dark queer-looking book, which they were quite sure was not the Bible, for she promptly stowed it away, when interrupted.

She never complained of poverty, though

her practice was too scanty to obtain her a livelihood ; but her dues, if not instantly paid, were strenuously demanded, and received without thanks. Her kail-yard and her cow, and a hive or two of bees, were her whole visible stock. That cow, too, was scarcely ever dry ; while the milch-kine of her neighbours had often no milk at seasons when there was no acknowledged cause for such lack. She had been occasionally known to absent herself from home for several days at a time, but none knew whither she had gone. At night, voices had been heard to ascend from the dark dell in which her habitation stood ; and more than once, from the house of Auchindown, (the nearest mansion, which was situated on a rising ground that overlooked the burn which ran past the door) several twinkling lights, of an unearthly blue, had

been seen at dead of night by the terrified servants, who had watched them glimmering among the alder bushes and high trees near her dwelling. The conclusions were that she dealt in the black art; and therefore was she nick-named the *Howdie-Witch*; howdie being, *anglice*, midwife.

When I was very young, a melancholy event transpired, in which Eeshpal Hossack had been more than suspected of taking an active part. I shall relate the circumstances, reserving the denouement for the latter part of this chapter.

Jeannie Grant was the bonny daughter of an honest cotter near Calder, and the affianced bride of William Rose, the young gardener at the Castle. This man had incurred the displeasure of the Howdie. Entering the garden one day, she unceremoniously began to fill her large, striped, woollen apron

with apples from one of the choicest trees ; in which operation she was interrupted by the indignant guardian of the fruit, who, telling her to be gone, rashly, perhaps unfeelingly added :—" Ye are no' to be takin' the aipples o' our vera best tree to play your ungodly cantrips wi'."

Flinging them down on the grass, with a look like that of an enraged wild-cat, and stamping her foot, she screamed out :—" Take back your trash ; but mind me, William Rose, proud as you are, you'll lose the love of Jeannie Grant as sure as I have lost these apples, and all for the taunt you have given me this day !" William afterwards owned that the fierce expression of the hag's countenance, as she uttered this denunciation, so "*yearned* (curdled) his very blood, that he looked like a cog o' crudlet milk in his mother dairy."

Sure enough it was, that a few days thereafter, a recruiting party attended the annual fair at Calder ; belonging to it was a handsome young Irish soldier, who attracted the eyes of the admiring damsels, but all were neglected by him for bonny Jeannie Grant. From that day, for the space of three months, each successive Sunday brought Dennis Neale from Fort George, on a visit to Calder. Jeannie's father, a rigid convenanter, interfered, and forbade him the house ; but, without his knowledge, Eeshpal the Howdie, offered the lovers free access to hers—besides, they had the thick green woods of Cawdor to wander in. William Rose, too, interfered, but Jeannie, with prompt indignation, dismissed him. In short, the poor girl, flattered by the fervent admiration of her gaily drest suitor, and cajoled by the crafty speeches of his

ally, the Howdie, became wholly infatuated. Yet it was with the firmest reliance on his promises of a speedy union that she finally became his victim ; and, as he placed a gold ring on her finger, in the presence of Eeshpal Gorm, he swore that when she next saw him it would be with the license from his commanding officer for their nuptials, in his pocket. She never saw him more. The regiment left Fort George by sea for Glasgow ; and week after week passed on, in alternate hope and fear to Jeannie, without any tidings from her faithless Dennis. At length, taking courage from despair, she wrote to the adjutant ; a reply came, which not merely confirmed her doubts—it destroyed her hopes at once. “ Dennis Neale had gone on furlough to Ireland, *accompanied by his wife.*”

The despair of the ruined girl may be

more easily conjectured than described : even from Eeshpal, her sole confidant, she received small sympathy. The heartless bel-dam made light of her anguish, contenting herself with promising assistance and concealment during the approaching crisis ; for Jeannie was about to become a mother ! But, one day, as her time drew near, the miserable young woman, in her sore distress and remorse, throwing herself at her father's feet, confessed her guilt. Old James Grant was, as I have said, a stern and rigid sectarian ; too frigid and severe himself to incur danger from the temptations of such sin as his daughter had yielded to, and too proudly bigotted to pity humbly as a Christian ; he had no mercy, no charity, for the penitent sinner ; and spurning her cruelly, as she knelt before him, he commanded her to leave his house for ever, and with the

ring on her finger, which was the badge of her bondage to Satan, purchase for herself and her unborn bastard a *winding-sheet*!

She left him, and none knew whither she went. One woman, while gathering fuel on the skirts of the wood, fancied that she saw Jeannie Grant, weeping bitterly and wringing her hands, among the thickets; but on calling to her, the wretched creature—if it was not rather her wraith—retreated amid the underwood, and was lost to sight.

It was not before some days had elapsed that Jeannie's misfortune became public. Remorse and pity then found way to her father's heart, and he disclosed the sad shame to his shuddering neighbours, who strongly censured, while they pitied him. Still, his cup of sorrow was not full—he would forgive her—she could only have gone to Eeshpal Gorm, the fatal abettor of all, he would seek

her there ; he knew that she had of late often visited the old witch. He sought her accordingly, but he found her not, The Howdie professed utter ignorance of Jeannie's fate ; she had not even seen her for a week ! but as the repentant parent left her threshold, whither he had been accompanied by the faithful gardener, the blue-checked hag whispered to the latter with a grin of satisfied malignity,—“ Wully Rose, my braw chiel, where's your rotten apples now ”

The woods, the waters, the bogs, far and near, were all searched, but searched in vain, —Jeannie Grant was never seen in life again.

This “ ower true tale ” was often repeated to me, as I sat on the knee of William, the gardener ; but what I am now going to relate of the Howdie witch, fell within my actual experience : yet I must preface the recital by a few facts—trivial in appearance, but of

material importance to the denouement of my history. It so happened, at the time I write of, when I was a boy of fourteen, that the house of Auchindown was occupied by the widow lady of the laird of Blairgowan. She was yet young, and handsome, ; a tall, dark beauty of the Italian style of countenance ; but there was something in her large black eyes, and an occasional quiver about her lips, that I did not like—and the youthful are proverbially physiognomists. She had married, solely for his wealth, a man of hideous aspect, of disgusting manners, and with a mind not very remote from imbecility. He died, leaving her childless ; but there was a will in her favour, drawn out by her own father, a wily W. S. of Edinburgh, by which she became possessed of all his personal property : not even his aged mother and destitute sisters, to whom he had always

shown a liberal kindness at variance with his general habits, were so much as named in the will ; while large legacies were left to his father-in-law and to *one other* individual. That other was Pearse Watkins, his favorite man servant, and—if all tales could be credited—the favorite also of his wife. Indeed, strange rumours had been current among the scandal-mongers, regarding this man and his mistress, even before the laird's decease ; since when, they had assuredly not decreased ; at all events it was evident, that great familiarity, such as ill became their relative positions as superior and domestic, existed between them ; and considerable shyness was accordingly manifested towards Mrs. Mackinnon by several families.

The Lady of Blairgowan had been some years a widow, and as she had gradually thrown aside her weeds, it was naturally

supposed that she would once more enter those gay scenes of life to which she had been accustomed, and in the gaieties of which she had partaken with no appearance of reluctance : but, on the contrary, she kept more to herself than ever, saw fewer visitors, and, although her mother came all the way from Edinburgh to see her, rejected all invitations and issued none. She had turned very charitable, too ; nor had it escaped remark that she paid particular attention to Eeshpal Gorm. That person had been very ill, for some weeks, and the lady had not confined her kindness to messages or messes, sent by careless proxies, but had gone herself to the Howdie's hut, and once had taken with her a medical friend, to whose care she recommended the old woman. On Eeshpal's recovery, she was frequently sent for by the lady ; and, as the servants used to tell with

amazement, she became at length such a favorite with Mrs. Mackinnon and her mother, that she was often detained for several successive nights—a bed was prepared for her in a closet adjoining “the mistress’s” own chamber, and she was never permitted to return home without ample proofs of the lady’s liberality. It is true that, at this period, Mrs. Mackinnon herself complained ; she needed a nurse, and she had taken a fancy to the Howdie. Everybody wondered, but everybody knew that the rich are whimsical, and nothing more was said.

It was autumn. The richest shades, all various, but all beautiful, of that delightful season, covered the woods of Cawdor. A thousand lovely wild flowers carpetted the rich sward, sprang up beneath the branching trees, and decorated each cliff and knoll, in the diversified grounds around the Castle.

The dark-tinted fir stood, like a frowning duenna, beside the pale and delicate chesnut ; the rough-leaved elm interlaced its boughs with the lordly and glittering beech ; the ash rattled its whimsical catkins, like a housewife proud of her bunch of keys ; and the geen and the mountain-ash—the former loaded with black-juiced and delicious cherries, the latter shaking its clusters of crimson berries, like chaplets of coral beads, adorned every avenue. By the banks of the wild and romantic mountain-brook that rushed through these sylvan scenes, the Queen of the Meadows shook her lovely head in the breeze, shedding the rich aroma of her scented tresses to the vesper bee, which, already glutted with its harvest of honey, sought lazily its distant hive. Wild-thyme fringed the brink of the distant burn, while brambles—dotted with their

mulberry-like fruit, guarded the yellow asphodels and delicate wood-sorrel from the rapacious hand of the prying botanist. Orchises, white, purple, and straw-coloured, sprang up in the moist swathes of forest-grass ; and in the magic light of eve, that tinted the brawling waters, now with an emerald and now with a ruby hue, the stern and stately castle of Earl Cawdor towered in baronial pomp over the woodland scene.

I had been enjoying a holiday in the woods, but the sun was near at set, and I was still at some distance from home before I began to think of returning. I reached a lonely spot in the forest, where path or track there was none, just as the top of a well-known rock, peering over the trees to my right, told me that I was passing within forty yards of the Howdie's hut. But though the sun had now set, my heart was

light, and I cared not ; but cheerily made my way over bush, briar, and ledge of stone. Presently I heard a sound, as if a person were digging in the earth. It came from the left-hand, where a high bank divided me, at that particular spot, from the brook.

The light of day had not yet entirely left the earth, but the place was naturally gloomy, and the trees shed an artificial obscurity around. I stopped to listen ; the noise continued, and my first boyish impression was, that one of my *treasures* had been discovered. Near the spot where I then stood I had found some days before a *byke*. Does the English reader ask what is a byke ? It is a nest of wild bees—a treasury of the richest and sweetest honey. Some sly cowherd, or fagot-gatherer, I conjectured, had discovered it ; and stealthily

I crept among the bushes, resolved to share in—if I could not save—the delicious spoil.

At length I drew near: my byke was safe; but there, on the ground, kneeling among the rushes and briars, down six or seven feet beneath me, was the Howdie Witch! She had scooped out a hole in the soil, in which I presently saw her place what at first seemed to be a roll of white cloth; but, just as she was about to lay it in the earth, part of the cloth fell off, and I beheld, with a shudder, the face of a child!

Boy as I was, I felt a strange desire to see more! and I watched until, having heaped earth and shingle over the unhallowed grave, the hag strode away. My homeward path lay in the same direction which she took, and which instead of being that to her own abode, led us to Auchin-

down. Proceeding by a by-road that brought her straight to the house, I lost sight of her and hurried home ; determined to unfold the weighty secret that burdened my breast to my mother. At home, however, all was confusion. My mother had been summoned away to a sick, or dying friend, some ten miles off ; my father was cross, or cold ; and I was, even then, not of a temper to disclose my sentiments or my sorrows to the domestics.

Next day I rambled towards Auchindown, and throwing myself beneath a tree, I meditated on the strange adventure of the past evening. I was attended by a pet terrier of my mother's. Fanny was a great favorite and seldom left her side ; but in the hurry of her departure from home, the animal had been forgotten, or perhaps purposely left behind. A cross and testy creature it was

to strangers, but faithful and affectionate to its friends. Suddenly its attention was aroused—it erected its ears—growled—and before I could discern who, or what, was the cause of its excitement, it burst from my restraining arms, and fiercely attacked a woman who was passing by. It was Eesh-pal Gorm ! Before I had time to call off the dog, she lifted a huge stone, and struck the animal with such force that it lay, completely stunned. Believing it to be dead, and enraged at the cruelty which had doomed my mother's pet to so sudden an end, I lost all caution ; and taking up the little terrier in my arms, I uttered a volley of boyish abuse on the beldam, concluding with these words :—“ Where's the poor bairn you buried last night, you old limmer ?”

Were I to live a thousand years I never

should forget the start, the glare of wolfish, diabolical rage which the old woman betrayed, as these words escaped my lips. For a moment she stood quite still, both hands clenched firmly together, and her shrivelled lips so far apart as to reveal her yellow, fang-like teeth ; the next, she seemed as if she were about to spring upon me ; but I waited not. Restraining, with some difficulty, the reviving Fanny, I rushed, ran, fled from the spot ; nor stopped until I found myself in the parlour, in the presence of my father.

Then it was that I told him my tale of wonders. He listened in silence ; but when I ceased, he laughed at what he called my romance. Yet, ever and anon, he recurred to the subject ; and I could perceive that it had not failed to make some impression on him. But he was an indolent man ; and

not until my mother's return, some days afterwards—not until she had heard my story and urged him to examine the spot, did he take any steps to investigate a circumstance that was, to say the least of it, suspicious. I then accompanied him and a chance visiter, who had, as in duty bound taken his hostess's side in the argument, to the mysterious grave. I found it readily, for the Howdie had taken little pains to conceal it; nay, I could not help thinking that all things looked far less horrible by day than they had seemed under the influence of twilight. We had provided ourselves with a spade—the earth was soon shovelled off—and there, behold! lay the rotting body of the Howdie's well-known old doited *dog*!

My father and the gentleman laughed loudly, while I stood confused—angry—and

—shall I own it?—*disappointed*. I had sworn to a white cloth, and the dog was certainly of a whitish colour ; and then they quizzed and jeered me about the grey dog which my fears had converted into a dead child wrapt up in a shroud ! I was ashamed and vexed, then ;—but now, at this time of day, I am firmly convinced that my imprudent speech to Eeshpal Gorm was the means of preventing the discovery of an iniquitous deed. I never saw the Howdie again, for in another month I left——, to which I only returned at rare intervals before I finally bade farewell to Scotland for India.

The Lady of Blairgowan's was a melancholy fate : after some weeks of severe indisposition, in which, with singular obstinacy, she rejected all medical attendance, she left Auchindown for France, where she was soon restored to health ; but on her return, two

years afterwards, while incautiously leaning over the side of the vessel, during a brisk gale, she overbalanced herself, and was precipitated into the sea. The night—for it happened in the night—was very dark ; and although every exertion to recover her, alive or dead, was made, her body was never found. What became of Pearse Watkins I know not ; but the following extract from a letter which I received from my father some ten years after the transactions I have thus briefly narrated took place, will tell the fate of the Witch with the Blue Cheek.

“ You remember the object of your juvenile dislike, Eeshpal Gorm, alias Isabel Hossack, the Howdie Witch of Cawdor ? Well, she is no more ; and her death has been attended by some suspicious circumstances that lead us to conjecture its having been caused by violence ; while other events

tend to throw some light—a horrid and dismal light—on the transactions of former years. I have had reason to regret the injudicious ridicule I cast upon what to me seemed the mere result of your youthful romance ; nay, I am inclined to believe, that occurrences, which in this world can never be wholly cleared up, must have taken place at that time between the inmates of Auchindown and Blue Eeshpal. The Howdie had been for several months in a very frail state of health ; indeed, the old woman could not have been far short of ninety,—and as winter drew on, she seldom left her hut. Your mother, ever alert where charity has a part to play, took care that she was plentifully supplied with food and fuel ; and in fact the peasantry—much as she had always been their aversion—had recently shown her great kindness in her need. She,

however, survived the winter, and was beginning to move about again, when one evening about a month ago, two of the servants were dispatched by your mother with some little comforts for her. As they descended the path that leads to her hovel they picked up among the bushes at the way-side a handsome fur boa, (which, by the bye, has since been recognised as having belonged to Mrs. Mackinnon). They were naturally enough astonished at this, and still more so when, a few paces in advance, a shilling was found ; and still nearer to the hut, a quilted cloth pouch, which was well known ; inasmuch as Eeshpal was rarely seen without it. Their alarm was excited to the utmost when, approaching the door, they heard the groans of a person evidently suffering from acute pain. The wretched old woman was, in effect, in a dying state.

She was lying on the floor, almost undrest ; as if she had either fallen from the bed, or been dragged from it ; and though apparently quite sensible, she was speechless. A gleam of satisfaction crossed her countenance as she saw who the intruders were, and she was gently laid upon her bed. Slowly she raised her hand and pointed to her throat, which indeed betrayed marks of violence ; the discoloured skin showed as if an attempt to strangle her had been made ; one of her fingers, too, was dislocated ; and, on closer examination, they perceived that her large *Kist*, or coffer, had been forced open and rifled.

“ She expired before the light of another day, still speechless, though making great exertions to speak ; and seemingly grateful for the kindness that was shown to her, and the prayers that were repeated at her bed-

side by one of the worthy neighbours. It was after her decease that, sewed firmly into a thick corner of the quilted pocket, where it must have escaped the depredators, a gold ring was discovered. I wish you had seen our new constable, William Rose, the ci-devant gardener, when this trinket was shown to him. His unaffected start would have been a study for a tragedian. He knew the ring instantly ; it was that, which many long years before, had aroused his jealousy on the finger of his betrothed bride ! Inside were the initials D. N. and J. G.—Dennis Neale and Jane Grant !

“ Not a scrap of paper, or indeed anything of an elucidatory nature, was found among the effects of the Howdie ; but the discovery of this ring set a thousand wild surmises afloat, regarding the fate of the unfortunate owner. Your adventure, too”

was raked up from the ashes of the past ; and at length the country-folks insisted on digging up the floor of the bothy, and burning the ruins, as a place accurst. They dug accordingly, but nothing was found, and the miserable hut was consumed. The Howdie, however, had a hive or two of bees, in her little garden, and these were sold. On removing them, two young lads, bent on the destruction of everything connected with the spot, began to take up the kail-stocks, beds of parsley, &c. Taking spades they dug and delved, till coming to the space over which the bee-hives had stood, one of the spades struck against a broad flag-stone at some depth from the surface of the ground ; a shove or two served to displace it, and it was raised. Pieces of cloth, shreds of rag, and bits of crockery and glass excited their curiosity. Presently

they found the bones and skull of an infant—and in two more strokes of the spade, the entire skeleton of a grown-up person struck the terrified gaze of the spectators ! The skeleton has been examined, and proved to be that of a female ! There cannot be a doubt that Jeannie Grant died in this hut—how, or by what means, rests with God ; but most probably in the pains of child-birth. You will say—‘ But there was yet *another* child !’ I do believe it ! Over its *second* grave the cloud still depends. Its death may have been natural ; but its birth was, at least, involved in mystery, most probably in guilt.”

CHAPTER II.

RECOLLECTIONS OF HOME.—MY EARLY FRIENDS.

TIME, in its flight, conveyed me to India, where I exchanged the masterdom of the academy for the martyrdom of the drill-ground. Lexicons were abandoned for light-infantry movements—algebra and book-keeping for the manual and platoon exercises, and Lindley Murray for Dundas. A red jacket, covered with gold lace, and a

smart cap and tassels, are more becoming than corduroys ; and there is a fascination in a sword and belt which does not belong to a satchel. Buoyant and full of glee, I ceased not to think with affection of the land I had left. The charm which bound me to my native hills was not formed of roses and lilies, but of the wild heather, with its purple bells ; and the flowery-fetter, though rude and hardy, gained in strength and constancy what it wanted in elegant fragility. It is said that the natives of all mountainous regions are more stedfastly attached to their homes than others are. Those mountain-barriers, that exclude us from the level fertility of the less elevated walks, shut in within their charmed circle our most fervent affections ; retaining them there even when we think to have shaken them off for ever, and permitting them to

wander about our hearts, like kind, but melancholy spirits amidst the exuberances of nature. Bounded to the remote sublimity of our woods, and cliffs, and glens, our love clings to each particular tree of our native forest,—the spirit haunts each rock of our native hills,—and the affections yearn to traverse again each rugged ravine and thorny dell of our native valley. In the body's exile from the glades of our Fatherland, the *spirit* re-visits them, recognizing with the faithful recollection of undying love each favorite vista, and shrub, and hillock ; nay, the very wildest weed :—the tall green lady-fern, waving its tresses over the mill-stream,—the ivy-clusters, bursting from their beds in the clefts of the rock,—the mountain-ash with its scarlet fruitage, dipping their coral treasures in the foam bells of the early dew !—all, and every one of

them, are they not dear to the absent heart, that cannot forget in manhood what was so familiar and beloved in youth ?

Those, on the other hand, who dwell in the dense atmosphere of cities,—in the gay haunts where no one thing bears the same aspect for two successive seasons,—where fashion, and custom (which is a sort of fashion vulgarized) changes the external face of all—can scarcely share in such feelings, while the chaining superstitions and innocent prejudices that bind the Highlander to his alpine home, fix his affections, through every alternative fate may award him, to the scenes where his first moments of enthusiasm were excited, and where his young heart had first been taught, in the sublime school of solitude, the mysterious lessons which Nature *will* whisper, even to the most thoughtless. It is not in the vapid routine

of a town life, nor amidst a round of continual gaieties, that the young mind can possess the same depth of, *almost*, pious enthusiasm that exists in the breasts of such as have won their first impressions of delight from external beauty. The eyry of the mountain-eagle—most ambitious of birds! the solitary pine, that has for ages stood sentinel on the jutting platform of some precipice, whose serrated pinnacles have had no other visitants than the grey mist and the blue lightning!—the brawling hill-stream, foaming and fuming over rock and recess, and dashing its harmless avalanche over a thousand obstacles—all of these have tongues to the ear of him who has been born within their influence, telling him tales of wild romance, but romance fraught with the most pure morality!

I recollect being twitted by a smiling

friend, to whom I had been boasting of the love of home inherent in the breast of the Highlander, with the remark of Buffon, who ascribes the same feeling to "that domestic animal, the *cat*!" But I think I may safely claim superstition as a bur that clings to the mountaineer's tartan, without dreading that, like love of localities, it shall be considered as an attribute of the feline race. Perhaps it is the necromancy of those wild and beautiful, nay, holy, superstitions, that render dearer to us scenes which are enriched by no luxuriance of vegetation, no rich garniture of green nature. And surrounded, as I now was, by Oriental splendour, how often and how tenderly did I yearn for the dreariest spot near my early home ; where, in truth, all was extensive moorland, heaths where the bee sucks its sweetest honey, fields of not very prolific

soil, barren mountains, and the universal sea ! That long streak of benty sand, how often have I wandered over it at night,—picking up shells and weeds, and thinking a thousand thoughts, which one so young had no business to think ! I had there two dear friends,—a youth of my own years, and his sister, older and wiser, but not less romantic than ourselves. We have often stolen away from the Manse after tea, to ramble on the sea-shore ; and when the summer air was around us, we would linger for hours among the banks skirting the beach—loading our handkerchiefs with wild berries ; the red cranberry, sweet in its gentle acidity—the luscious whortleberry, and black crow-berry ; while we marvelled, in the simplicity of our young hearts, *why* we could not reach those bright stars that shone over us, or pierce through the brown

hillock on which we reposed, and discover one of those fairy islets in the bosom of the earth, of which we had heard such strange tales! We would talk there of fearful legends and wonderful things, until we scarcely preferred returning over the dreary heath to remaining where we were, all the long night,—so wildly had we churned up the feelings of alarm within us! We had heard of the Water Kelpy, that shrieks in the stream—and of the Mermaid, curling her emerald tresses on the ocean's billow, and singing the while such harmonious lays as lured the listener to her dangerous embraces. Besides, had not my father, in his youth, heard the Fairy-shout, when he was watching by the bed of an expiring Elder? (I wonder if he had a *third* jug of whiskey-toddy beside him!) and had not James's nurse seen a dark horseman, one night, rid-

ing with supernatural velocity from the lonely grave-yard ; and was there not visible a white shape thrown across his charger's neck ; and had there not been that very day the burial of an unhappy girl, who was suspected of having committed child-murder ? And had not *death-candles* been seen to glide across the moor we had to traverse ? A million similar fancies would torment us, and oh ! how sweetly would our angelic companion endeavour to convince us of the folly of harbouring these fears, from which the tremor of her own arm evinced that she was not wholly free ! *Æmelia* Alves became a happy wife, after I left Scotland ; ever delicate, and far less earthly than heavenly, consumption soon removed her to her proper home ! and James, her wilful, manly brother, became a sailor. He loved, toiled hard to provide a

home for the sweet girl who, through many years and many trials, remained true to him,—and when as yet their first year of wedded life had scarcely passed, left her, *widowed*. He was drowned, lost in the ship he commanded.

CHAPTER III.

MY BROTHER OFFICERS.—IBRAHIM SHA, THE
FAKEER.

IN the early part of the year 1823, the regiment of Native Infantry to which I was then attached, was stationed at Kulladghee, in the Doab ; a lonely but healthy place, aloof from all other society than that which was afforded by the two regiments of foot and one of cavalry that occupied this roughly-constructed cantonment of mud-

built, grass-thatched houses. The reviews were just over ; all our long, preparatory penances of drill had terminated with that annual inspection which, by the martinet commandant of a division, may be rendered so intensely disagreeable ; but our pro-tempore tyrant happened to be in a good humour, and the sumptuous review-dinners which sent him away from the cantonment in great glee, but with an incipient indigestion, which was soon to show its dire effects in sundry severe strictures and bilious orders, left us, for a time, free from the overwhelming monotony of eternal parades and drills—sometimes thrice a day !

A happy, hearty, generous set of fellows were the officers then composing the 2nd battalion, 22nd regiment. We were as members of one family ; and, though now and then slight occasions might give rise to

slighter quarrels, we were, generally speaking, *brothers*. Our *brusque*, bluff, somewhat surly, but cheerful and just, commanding officer was Colonel Ferrior, a man who never stooped to the whispers of tale-bearers, nor encouraged the petty baseness of those fawning sycophants that are, alas! ever found ready to crouch and cringe and lie at the feet of authority. Escaping, as we had recently done, from the sway of a man his direct opposite, there were few of us who failed to appreciate his worth; and he was seconded in his efforts to make us live amicably by his worthy adjutant. How few of the merry sixty—invited and invited—who *sang* in the morning after our review-banquet over a huge bowl of punch and divers dishes of devilled meats, *now* live to remember it! Methinks I still see William Coxe, the young, the gay, the hand-

some, sitting at the head of the table, and brewing a tureen-full of what we used to call "*peeshash-punch*!" *Peeshash* meaning '*devil*.' Brandy and wine, and a strong decoction of green tea, cinnamon, cloves, lime-juice, a squeeze of pomegranate, and—oddest of all ingredients—a large spoonful of *butter*, were the materials of which this demon-draught was composed. Alas! Coxe, with almost all of the jovial group, are in their graves! Clemons, the daring rider at every fox-hunt; Blanch, the surest shot in the Doab, excepting his captain, burly old Crowe, who was never known to miss but once; and then a fair Brinjari girl—the gipsy of our Eastern Indies—caught his eye as he was about to fire; and the ball, instead of even startling the antelope which was his intended victim, entered the astonished corpus of a homely village hog,

that had perversely wandered into the *mydan* (plain)—greatly to the confusion of the Captain!—Colebrooke, the best hand at billiards among us, a true sportsman, too, and up to everything ; Boddam, warm and Welsh ; M'Cally, temperate, polished, and a scholar as well as soldier ; Phillipson, a beautiful youth, afterwards shot through the head, as he gallantly advanced to the storming of a hill-fort!—Shaw, the pet of the whole regiment!—all, all are dead, with one exception ; and he—is *married*. But the difference between wedlock and death is so slight, in the eyes of a determined bachelor, that verily I had overlooked it.

“ The Colonel says that half of you, my boys, may have a month’s leave,” said the Adjutant, as we sat beneath the *pandal* of

our homely thatched mess-house, in the cool of an evening soon after our review.

“And who are the *elite* ?” asked one.

“Of course those who have been longest without a holiday.”

“I want to go to Belgaum,” said Clemons ;
“there is to be a grand *toomasha* (piece of sport) there ; a regular shindy ; fox-chases, jackal-hunts, horse races ; and they talk of mounting some old Paria women on donkeys, who are to be paid for the job—the women, I mean ; a steeple chase of old grannies on jackasses, only think !”

“I’ll go with you, if I can,” said Blanch ;
“and if I can get Jafferjee to advance me another hundred rupees—”

“You must pay your mess-bill first, my lad ;” cried Bowen, who was our mess-secretary—the best fellow in the corps, and the

noblest in all the world, be the other who he may.

“I want to spear a hog,” cried Colebrooke, “and promised to join a set of the 18th at Dharwar : besides I haven’t tried my new Manton.”

“I should like to go to the Presidency,” sighed a young ensign, with long flaxen hair and a face expressing nothing, who had only joined the regiment a few months before, and whose family were at Madras.

“Nonsense,” exclaimed the Adjutant, “you are not yet weaned, child. *You* can’t go ; besides the Moonshee says you pay no attention to your studies. You haven’t got out of the first book of the *Toti-Nameh* yet.”

“The Moonshee is a humbug ;” said the ensign, trying to look indignant. “I can speak as well as some of the others.”

■

“ For instance,” cried Blanch, “ the other day you went up to the old Cazi, who is the strictest Moslem out of Mecca, and coolly asked him to lend you his pig.”

“ Well,” replied the ensign, blushing as red as his jacket, “ you told me that *soor* was the Hindoostani for a horse ; but I know better now—it is *gudda*.”

“ Ah, *you* are a *gudda* ;” said Blanch, *sotto voce* ; while everybody laughed, for everybody else knew that while *soor* was a hog, *gudda* was an ass, and *ghorra* a horse.”

“ I think,” observed Coxe, “ I shall palanquin it down to Bellary—the Wallaces are there.”

“ Very well,” cried the Adjutant, “ only mind—no petticoats to be introduced into the corps, married men ruin a regiment,—the women are like moles, and kick up a

dust wherever they go. I know you are rather sweet on Lucy. Hang married men, they destroy a mess !”

The Adjutant, Mac Cally, was the first man of that party who became a Benedict.

“ Well, Rob,” said another, addressing me by my regimental sobriquet,—“ Where do you mean to go ?”

“ Oh,” growled Scott, who did not like me, and whose voice was harsher than his nature—“ Campbell will shut himself up and achieve a centenary of sonnets : he can’t shoot, for he is purblind ; don’t ride, for he is timid ; won’t gamble, and there are no amateur theatricals nearer than Bangalore for him to figure at as *prima donna*.”

“ Nevertheless,” answered I, “ I mean to take my privilege. I shall go to Poona, where there is a theatre, and my brother—

whom I have not seen for fifteen years. Besides, I hear there are some splendid Nautch girls there and——”

“ Ha, ha, ha,” interrupted the group.

I looked up in astonishment, thinking that I had made some unintentional pun, or that the distance from Poona had aroused them.

“ You know very well,” added I, “ that I can run *dawk*, night and day ; and as I am collecting all the Hindoostani songs I can procure, I prefer taking them down from the lips of the dancing-girls themselves.”

“ No doubt your collections from their lips are very sweet.”

“ Stuff, Clemons ! I assure you, I have already several dozen *rekhtas* (odes), obtained in the same manner. I take a great deal of pleasure in the society of the *kun-*

chuns," (dancing-girls) continued I, very innocently."

"Nobody doubts it."

"I should like, at any rate, to visit the ruins of Beejapore; and I have heard of a short cut over the hills, which has never been attempted by any white man."

"Then, Rob, I would advise you to take care of yourself. You may chance to fall in with bad company; the Thugs are about."

"Oh! they never attack Europeans. Besides, I am going to take old Ibrahim Sha as my guide."

"Well! if ever!" said Coxe.

"What? that horrid old Fig-hare?" asked the ensign.

"*Fakeer* is the word," said Bowen, reprovingly; "you don't pronounce the gutturals, young man."

"I wonder," said the ensign, aside to Phillipson, "what *are* the gutturals?"

"I'd as soon trust myself with Fra Diavolo, or any other interesting cut-throat bandit of the mountains, as go with that crafty *darhi-suffeed* (white-beard)," said Shaw.

"Oh, Rob would trust himself with anybody, for an adventure; not excepting a young fashionable beauty, just landed for the matrimonial bazaar."

"Ibrahim Sha is a fine fellow," cried I; "he knows the world better than most men—is not a bit of a bigot—and tells tales that vie with those of the Princess Scheherazadè."

"What will you bet," said Coxe, "he don't give us a step, by treating Rob to an extra dose of nux vomica in his curry?"

"I'll bet you a dozen of champagne that

on my return I'll think as highly of the fakeer as I do now," cried I.

"Done!" said Coxe, who was always ready to take up any bet.

"Done!" cried Boddam, who was always ready to drink his share—be the quantity what it might—of any liquor, lost or won in regimental bettings.

"Besides," rejoined I, "Ibrahim Sha is not the only man of his class to whom I have trusted myself."

And who, says the reader, was Ibrahim Sha?

In all the Doab*—nay, from Madras to Poona, no person was better known than Ibrahim Sha, the wandering fakeer. He was a religious mendicant of the least offen-

* *Doab* means any track of country between two rivers; there are several doabs in Hindostan, but we now are writing of the Madras Presidency.

sive description ; that is to say, he neither sought to entitle himself to the joys of Paradise by personal exposure, *conglomerated by faith*, or the self-infliction of bodily tor-
tures. In fact, it is chiefly the *Suniassie*, or fanatic of the Hindu persuasion, who resorts to those revolting measures—sometimes of a nature too disgusting for description—to obtain the fame of sanctity on earth, and the certainty of glory on high. But Ibrahim Sha was a high-born Mussulman, evidently of a parentage and education above the common order—for he read and wrote fluently, and was singularly well informed on most points. None knew whence he came, or what his early career had been, for on those subjects he was entirely silent ; and the Mahomedan community are not accustomed to question their religious brethren, considering such curiosity highly indelicate

and reprehensible. By those who knew him sufficiently to gauge the depths of his intellect, and to measure the extent of his knowledge, he was respected,—and, it may be, occasionally feared : singularly void of that illiberal bigotry which makes men of all creeds, from the burning Moslem to the narrow-minded and modern Non-Intrusionist of Scotland, fierce, turbulent, and arrogant, he sometimes offended the vulgar prejudices of his sectarian brotherhood ; but they admired his learning and dreaded his sarcasm too thoroughly to annoy him ; while the poor and humble always found him charitable, nor did the opulent accuse him of greedy avarice.

About some sixty years of age, he was a tall, muscular, and still robust man, with fine features, and keen black eyes that brightly contrasted with his snowy beard.

Wrapt in the *Kulundur's* patchwork mantle, with a yellow turban on his head, and a huge club in his hand, he strode on—muttering sentences of the Koran, occasionally chaunting a *mursia*, or elegy to the memory of the martyred Hoossain and Hassan, or distributing slips of paper, filled with cabalistic characters, which were—as he asserted—talismans to keep aloof the fiends of Eblis, or the more tangible tortures of toothache. But to proceed.

My arrangements with Ibrahim Sha were soon concluded; and, in a few days, accompanied only by two faithful servants, and a lascar, to whom was consigned the management of a *bechoba*, or small tent without a pole, I started on my pedestrian trip to Bejapore; a distance of only forty miles by the rough, unfrequented track over the hills, which the Fakeer had recommended for its

novelty ; and on which to attempt horsemanship would have been folly, inasmuch as it was not without difficulty the tough little mountain bullock that carried my canvass pavilion was enabled, aided by his leader and the *coolie* who was laden with our crockery and cooking materials, to ascend and descend the numerous steep and declivities in our way. I had no desire to hasten my progress, but rather preferred lengthening the journey ; so that my plans entirely concurred with the wishes of the Fakeer, whose object was to proceed but a short distance each day, in order that at each halting-place he might levy his contributions either on the auditors of his discourses, and the purchasers of his texts, or distribute the alms he collected from the rich among such as were poorer than himself.

A guide—sent by the Fakeer, who had himself proceeded the evening before to our first *munzila*, or resting-place,—was in waiting on the fine February morning, when crossing the Gutpurha river, I left Kuladghee : a short agreeable walk of six miles brought me to Jalmutty---a hamlet among the hills---at the entrance of which---his praying-carpet spread before him---stood Ibrahim Sha, repeating in loud and sonorous tones choice sentences from the Koran, to a crowd of villagers---few of whom departed without throwing a coin or a cowry on the carpet ; while some of the wealthier brought offerings of rice, *ghee* (clarified butter), spiceries, or fruit. I found my small tent pitched below an enormous banyan tree, whose myriad branches, flinging their drooping offshoots for many yards around, penetrated the earth---there to take

root ; thus forming a bower of one tree that sheltered myriads of birds.

I did not see the Fakeer during the day, for he had visits to pay to many of his old acquaintances and disciples, in the fields and gardens around ; but on the next morning he was my companion across a rugged hill-path, through a wild and picturesque but barren country ; whilst the ten miles we had to walk seemed doubled by the difficulty of the way. Road, indeed, there was none : a few rutty paths, or (as the Fakeer expressively called them) *chowr-rusta*, i. e. thieves' tracks, were all we had to lead us over a succession of ghauts of considerable steepness ; beyond which, we came upon a fertile extent of cultivation, amidst which lay our *munzil-gah*--the large village of Seedapore, surrounded by fields of grain, cotton, and

carthamus. As we passed through the village to a tope, or grove, of tamarind trees, where the Fakeer advised me to pitch my canvass, as the place contained no ruined tomb or mosque of sufficient size to accommodate us, and the only *serai*, or *choultry*, in the village, was old and filthy,—I was struck by the appearance of a stone figure ; it was the resemblance of a monstrous tiger, cut in granite and mounted on a platform ; beside which rose the humble *tekia*, or shrine of a *Wullee*, or saint. An aged man—bent almost double—with white hair floating over his shoulders—was muttering his *namaz*, or prayers, as we approached ; and Ibrahim Sha, stooping before the shrine, bowed reverentially as he gave the *Salaam aleikoom* to his venerable brother.

“ It is Ahmed Sha,” whispered he ;

the oldest fakeer in all India ; and I must remain to pay my respects."

In the course of the day, however, I saw my friend again, and then asked him the origin of the monumental tiger.

"Does not the Sahib remember," said he, "that during our discussion one day, regarding the various creeds that are to be found in this world, showing that there are as many roads to *Behisht* (paradise) as there are to the *duria* (sea), I promised to tell him a tale that might induce him to form an opinion as to the superiority of the Musselmin faith over all others,—provided the Sahib accompanied me to Bejapore?"

"I remember."

"*Bhalla, Sahib!*—very well, sir. The story which I have to tell, though indeed it is no tale but a truth, refers to that

tiger ; and teaches us how Allah treats the relative creeds of the Mosleman, the Christian, the Jew, and the Brahmin. May the tombs of the fathers of the two last be defiled!" added the Fakeer, forgetting that a brahmin has no tomb.

"Of course," observed I, with an embryo sneer, "Allah was favorable to Mahommed."

"Allah is favorable to all who believe conscientiously," said the Fakeer, with a reproving look ; "but the sahib shall hear, if he chooses to place the ears of attention on the head of patience."

"Tell on, my good friend."

"Then sit down, *Khodawund*—my lord ; but not there—for the white ants are busy there with their harvest, and might interfere with our comfort ; but here, on this green bank, where I do not smell the musky scent

of the serpent. Here, sahib, *beit-ho*—sit down, and taste these *bair-ke-phull*; they are fresh, and ripe, and good for the digestion." I sat down, partook of the fruit of the *Ziziphus jujuba*, and prepared to listen. The evening was beautiful, the air mild and pure, and around us breathed the delicious odours of a field of *Carthamus*, in full orange blossom, as the Fakeer commenced his tale,

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAKEER'S TALE OF THE TIGER.

“ You must know, sahib,” began the Fakeer, (whose historiette I render in English with my best skill), “ that it was Muzaffer Adil Sha, Sovereign of Beejapore in the year of the Christians 1480, who introduced the Sheea sect of Mahomedans into the Deccan, and instituted the ceremonies of that body of worshippers, as being the most likely to

entitle mankind to the joys of Paradise. Now, at the time, a very celebrated Wullee, or saint, resided here ; it is his tekia (pillow, or resting-place) which stands close to the stone-tiger that attracted your notice as we entered Seedapore ; and which is now occupied by old Ahmed Sha. This saintly anchoret, by name Kadir Khaja, was so very aged that no person could tell the day when he was first seen employed in the worship of Alla, at his wayside hermitage : but he was acknowledged by all to be a devout man, and the whole of the Deccan bore testimony to his sanctity. The sick and the sore flocked to Kadir Khaja, from all quarters of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, for he was an adept in chemistry and botany ; and, as if he were the inheritor of King Sooliman's seal, (may his dust be revered !) he had the power to deprive minerals and herbs of

their medicinal attributes; whereby he acquired great celebrity as a *hakeem*—physician. He had moreover made the pilgrimage to Mecca, as the sahib knows from the honorary addition of the word *Khaja* to his name; nor did he, as many of our zealots do, confine his knowledge of physic to his own followers, but extended the benefits of his skill to all who appealed to him; neither were the proselytes he made few, in consequence of this prudent policy.

“At that time, however, when the Sheeas and the Soonnis were at such bitter feud, and the former had the countenance of the court, the idolatrous Hindoos—taking advantage of the dissension reigning among their conquerors—endeavoured by every sinister means to augment the strife, and to raise the barriers of objection against a creed, which (they asserted) could only be

a fallacious one since it caused such enmity amongst its disciples, who divided into more than one ramification. There happened to be at Seedapore a very cunning and malicious old Brahmin, who exercised great influence over the inhabitants of the place and its environs, most of whom were Hindoos, by his astute knowledge and sagacity. Now, this man, may his mother's grave be defiled ! was a bitter enemy to the Khaja, whom he regarded with eyes of envy and hatred ; and though the Mahomedan authority was too firmly established hereabouts to admit of his doing the good man an essential injury, yet he often contrived by sly hints and scoffing insinuations to raise a laugh at his expense ; so that Kadir Khaja had many trials to contend with. But he was a meek forbearing man, and chose rather to endure submissively the

taunts and petty insults of the *bootpurrists*—idolators—than seek exemption from them by revenge : though, doubtless, had he so pleased, he might, by representing their conduct to the Mahomedan Power, have ensured their punishment, or even total discomfiture.

“ It occurred, one evening, as the principal inhabitants of Seedapore were assembled together beneath the gigantic banyan tree, which is still to be seen not many furlongs from the tekia, that they were discussing the disputes that had arisen among the Mussulman community ; none of whom happened to be present : and as the uncircumcised dogs were in the heat of railing against both Sheeas and Soonnees—heaping up loads of dirt upon all Moslems indiscriminately—Kadir Khaja was observed passing by. They called out to him to draw near, and asked him to which of the two sects he

belonged. but though the Khaja was at heart a strict Soouni, he did not choose to reveal this fact to them ; for he knew that the Sultan was opposed to the Soonnees—and so merely replied that he was a worshipper of Alla and a believer in the Prophet, and that it mattered not to *them*, whose obeisances were made to idols of stone, painted logs of wood, monkeys, and serpents, whether he chose to eat his rice after performing one simple ablution, or dispensed with that formality altogether. They sneered—calling him an old fox—whilst the Brahmin, Jaloo, said : ‘Well, Khaja, it would be better if you Mahomedans confined the indulgence of your appetites to rice and ghee, eschewing such sanguinary atrocities as flesh and fowl.’

“ A Mahratta soldier, who stood by, leaning on his spear, exclaimed rather irreverently

—‘It is a marvellous matter that this same Prophet of yours, if he be so powerful, should permit us *bootpurrists*, as you term us, to exist! If he is omnipotent, as you pretend, why does he not put an end to us at once?’ ‘Why do not your many-headed and many-handed gods do as much by us?’ demanded the Khaja. ‘You have a Destroyer in Seeva; and a Preserver—but it would seem that of late the latter has been somewhat indolently inclined.’

“The Brahmin, Jaloo, was irritated by this taunt, and exclaimed—‘Tush, neighbours; let Time show who will be preserved and who destroyed. But if this satirical Khaja is the saint his followers call him, don’t you think he could prevail on Alla and his Prophet to destroy this scourge of a tiger that carried away the Kullundar fakeer the other day, and made his supper last night

on Bhaloo, the *dhobee's* (washerman) mother, as she was gathering cow dung for fuel. Truly the animal must be a Mahomedan, judging by his taste for flesh !'

" ' The *bhanchoot janwur*—cursed beast—must have had a tough morsel ;' cried Rana, the *hujam*—barber ; ' for the *boodhi*—old woman—was near a hundred years of age.'

" ' It is my advice,' suggested the Mahrattar, ' that the *Feringhie padre*—European missionary—who is confined here for preaching the Christian doctrine, be sent out against the *bagh*—tiger,—to try and convert him with a bottle of Arrack ; for they say the *topee-wallahs*—hat-wearers—are never fit for anything till they are drunk.'

" ' And I propose,' added a *dowkandar*—shopkeeper---' that the *Yahoodi*---Jew---merchant, who is his fellow-captive for steal-

ing Manaroo's nose-ring, shall be sent with him to share in the glory and danger of the exploit. But, Khaja-jee, the Yahoodis are a sort of Mussulmans---are they not circumcised ?

“ ‘ *Khooda-na-Kurré* !---God forbid that they should be Mussulmans ! they are a wicked race and betrayed their prophet. As for the Christians, though they are too prone to wrangle and to drink unholy waters, they are better than these Jews ; and they moreover know how to read the Koran ;’ ejaculated the Khaja.

“ ‘ But what is all that concourse of people ?’ said the Brahmin : and the eyes of the party were directed towards a crowd of men, women, and children, who flocked from the fields, shouting and hallooing as if they had seen *Shytan*---Satan.

“ In short, it soon appeared that the very

tiger they had been discoursing about, had fallen into a deep pit which the villagers had dug for it, near a cattle-fold ; and over which they had placed a layer of reeds and grass, to which they had fastened a couple of kids, by way of bait. Great was the rejoicing on all sides to hear that this monster, which of late had been committing so many ravages, was at length caught ; but as the Potal, or head man of the village, was absent, they dared not take any steps towards the destruction of the brute until his return, which was momentarily expected. On his arrival, however, the night was too far advanced to do anything ; and the pit was sufficiently deep to prevent their entertaining any apprehensions that the tiger would effect his escape.

“ Some of the party proposed shooting the creature, early next morning ; others were

for stifling it with burning straw, sprinkled with sulphur ; while a parasite of the Cazi's added that it would be no great harm if they flung the Christian and Jew prisoners into the pit. Jaloo and his adherents whispered to each other, that to add the Wullee to the captives would be a fine joke ; but there were too many of the Islam creed present to render their ideas on this subject safe, if uttered aloud. Now the Potal was a Mussulman, and his friend the Cazi, who was a bigotted Sheea and bitterly opposed to all save the servants of Mahommed, clutched eagerly at this proposal—cruel though it was, and made half in jest. He therefore offered to write an *urzee*—petition—to the proper authorities at Beejapore ; requesting to know what punishments should be executed on the infidel captives at Seedapore.

“ ‘ Who knows,’ observed he, ‘ but we may obtain permission to do with them whatever we please ; and in that case we can have glorious *toomasha*—fun—by making them fight with the tiger.’ No sooner said than done. Ere another hour, a letter was written and despatched to Beejapore, and the whole populace of the village and its neighbourhood were thrown into a state of pleasurable excitement, in the hope of some sport on the morrow.

“ Meantime our friend, Kadir Khaja, had retired to his cell ; where he meditated in solitary silence on what had happened ; and, as he did not doubt but that the *Kafirs*—infidels—would be given up to the tender mercies of the inhabitants, he prayed heartily that they might escape the claws of the ravenous beast—or at least be enlightened by a ray from the shadow of Alla

(for verily the shadow of God is light!) before they perished. So praying, the pious devotee fell fast asleep ; and in a vision, behold ! the blessed angel, Gabriel, appeared before him and exclaimed :—

“ ‘ Oh ! Khaja, worthy servant of Alla, fear nothing. Your prayers have ascended to the seventh heaven, and before many hours are over, Mahommed will prove to the idol-worshippers of the town not only his power, but the extent of his clemency towards those whom he adjudges most worthy to receive it. To-morrow attend fearlessly the combat which will take place with the tiger. Openly profess your resolution to stand by the captives during their conflict with that animal---unprotected save by the holy Koran in your hand. Resist all attempts that may be made to bring you into a place of more apparent safety ; and

your reward will be the fulfilment of your desires. At that moment when it will seem to you that the Angel of Death has done his duty, bethink thee of the prophet Issa, who could restore the dead to life; and a spirit of good will prompt you what farther is to be done.' Three times this vision was repeated, in the course of that night; and when the Khaja rose in the morning, it was with a steady determination to obey the commands imposed on him, in every particular.

"The messenger returned from Beejapore sooner than might have been anticipated, bearing in reply a missive, which contained the following words :—' You are permitted to do with the prisoners what seemeth good unto you.' And great was the joy that followed the proclamation of this award, in Seedapore! Now, all through the long

night, the tiger had kept up a tremendous noise—roaring in a manner that made everybody tremble; and it was sometime ere men could be found adventurous enough to approach the pit, where he raged like a demon; but a strong network of thick rope, and coils of the same made into nooses, had been prepared to entangle him with; and at length a party of stout young fellows volunteered to drag the creature from his den. The two miserable captives were released from their confinement, and—to their great amazement and alarm—were armed with spears, creeses, and matchlocks, while they were told the doom that awaited them. Each was to advance singly, and in turn, to attack the tiger. If success ensued—as was not impossible, since the animal would be so crippled and embarrassed by the cordage flung over him—liberty was

to be accorded ; but, in case of failure, the probability was that one, or both, would become the prey of the infuriated creature, which by accident might escape from the encumbering network.

“ Close to the pitfall arose a small but strong mud fortalice, or watch-tower, now in ruins ; but the walls of which, some seven or eight feet high, were chosen as the safest situation whence the spectators might witness the combat. By four o'clock in the afternoon all was ready : processions were formed—banners carried—tom-toms beaten, as if they had been unmannerly slaves—and horns sounding. The tiger was with great difficulty entangled in the cordage ; and, hideously roaring, was dragged from the pit, while the ropes were fastened to two large peepul trees that grew beside it. The party of *juwans*--young men---then retreated into

the turret, on the walls of which the Cazi, the Potal, and the principal inhabitants of Seedapore were assembled; all, except Kadir Khaja, the Wullee, who suddenly advancing towards the spot where the prisoners stood, placed himself face to face with the tiger, which—roaring like thunder and lashing the earth with its tail—made the ground they stood on quake.

“ ‘ *Idhur ào, dewana!*—Come hither, madman!’ shouted the Cazi; ‘or you will be slain.’ But the Khaja shook his head.

“ ‘ *Bismillah*—in the name of Alla!’ cried he, ‘I will remain where I am. If it is *his* will that I fall, so be it. But He can protect me, if it be His pleasure, though surrounded by beasts of prey and infidels.’

“ Now the Cazi and the other Mussulmans present, although they would have shuddered to follow the example of the de-

votes, deemed it policy to heap the heaviest *afreens*—eulogies—on his conduct ; particularly as there were so many Hindoos present.

“ ‘ May Allah preserve you,’ said the Cazi ; ‘ you speak truth. A true follower of the Prophet, with the Koran in his hand, needs no spear nor shield. It will be long before the best Brahmin that ever burnt cowdung in honour of Vishnoo will follow such an example.’ These words excited the fury of the Hindoos, and after a slight whispering among them, Jaloo, the Brahmin, pronounced his determination to descend and prove that his faith in the *Trimurti* (the Hindoo Trinity) was not to be surpassed by that of the Moslems in their Prophet.

“ He had scarcely taken his place beside the Wullee ere the tiger, with a roar of defiance that exceeded all his former yells,

made so desperate a struggle to free himself from his trammels, that one of the trees behind him to which he was lashed, with a loud crack became partially shivered ; and falling forward, its top branches struck down the Jew, who, in compliance with a signal from the Cazi, had first advanced to the attack. Terrified by the unexpected issue of his own struggles, the tiger, for a moment crouching to the earth, made a backward leap ; which in some measure restoring the tree, (which was not rent in twain,) to its former position, carried its upper boughs over the head of the tiger, bearing with them the entangled body of the unfortunate Jew !

“ The long yellow *Kummerbund* (girdle) that had been twined round his waist had, somehow, in his efforts to extricate himself, worked upwards till it became tightened

round his throat ; while the ends of it—fixed firmly in a cleft of the tree—at every fresh struggle conduced to hasten the catastrophe. Five minutes had not passed before the starting eyes—the gurgling voice—the convulsed limbs—assured the appalled spectators, dumb with horror, that a dying man swung before them !

“ At length the Cazi, watching the renewed glare of the tiger’s eyes, called out to the Christian padre to fire off his match-lock,---which restored the self-possession of the crowd. The Missionary, with a pale brow but an untrembling step, drawing near while the animal lay huddled up in apparent terror, discharged the piece---but, *mèashalla* ! what happened ? Instead of seeming even to have touched the beast, the ball sundered in twain the principal knots of the ropes that bound him---and with a terrible

yell and a struggle that tore up the earth around him, the tiger released himself at a bound from the cordage. With one stroke of his paw he cleft in twain the large, round, fat head of Jaloo, the Brahmin---dashed the Christian to the ground, with a sweep of his tail---and then, to the unexampled astonishment of the panic-struck beholders, crouching on its belly, it advanced to where the Wullee, Kadir Khaja stood, the Koran in his hand,---and stooping at his feet, licked the old man's hands, as if it had been a pet-gazelle---and then, with a sudden bound springing up, darted round the corner of the fortalice, and disappeared !

“ For a short space all were too much agitated to descend from the walls ; but the voice of the Wullee, calling on them in the name of Alla to take courage, at length in-

spired them with resolution to leave the turret and approach him.

“ *Ai Khaja sahib, yè kya burra afat hie !* what dreadful misfortune is this ?” exclaimed the Oazi, as his eyes fell on the bloody and mangled form of the Brahmin, the black, distorted countenance of the strangled Jew, and the apparently lifeless body of the Christian, as it lay facewards to the earth.

“ No misfortune,” cried the Wullee in a loud and solemn tone, “ but a miracle to shew the power and mercy of the true God ! Oh ! worshippers of wood and stone,” added he, addressing the Hindoos, “ how basely have your deities treated you ! There lies the bleeding corpse of your chief priest, the proud Jaloo !—And Oh ! Yahoosis, if there be any one of that perfidious tribe present, behold there hangs—strangled by his own linen—the descendant of him who betrayed

his master with a kiss. Lo, too, the Christian is in a swoon, for he is not dead! Pottail-jee, command the *moordu feroshes* (corpse dressers), whom I see behind you, to bring the bodies of the Jew and Brahmin before me."

"The tone of authority with which Kadir Khaja delivered these words was not to be disregarded: the corpses were laid before him, and then, accosting the spectators, he exclaimed—

" ' Raise that fainting Christian from the earth. His prophet, Issa (glory to his name) was the blessed Massiha, or Raiser from the Dead; and I am commanded by Mahomed to prove to you that this heavenly power has been, for purposes of great mercy, conferred on the now breathless person before you. This missionary is a good and meek man.

Lay him, oh ! corpse dressers, on the bodies of the dead.

“ ‘ Oh, wonderful power of Alla. No sooner had the body of the Christian touched the corpses of the Brahmin and the Hebrew, than they became animated with the breath of life ; and the missionary, the Jew, and Jaloo, stood once more alive in the presence of the admiring crowd. But from that day the Jew became an idiot, while the Brahmin, undergoing the rites of circumcision, embraced the Mahomedan religion : an example which was soon followed by the greater number of the Hindoo population of Seedapore and its environs. The Missionary, exchanging the *salaam aleikoum* with the Wullee, departed for Madras, and thus, Campbell sahib, Alla proved to the idolators that his favourite creed is not that of the Shaster or Talmud.”

"It is a strange story, Fakeer ;" said I, as Ibrahim Sha concluded his narrative, "but the tiger—was it no more seen?"

" ' Sahib,' replied the Fakeer, stuffing an immense quid of prepared betel into his mouth, ' it is reported that the tiger— or a spirit in its visible form—comes once a year, on the anniversary of the night on which, not long after this miracle occurred, Kadir Khaja was removed to paradise, and with its long tail sweeps the dust from the tombstone of that holy man ; after which it retires slowly to the woods.' "

" And so endeth the Fakeer's tale of a tiger."

CHAPTER V.

ABANDONMENTS.—MAHOMEDPORE.—THE THUGS.
—A MURSIA.—AND NOTHING NEW ABOUT THE
MOON.

I BEGIN to think, that in giving the title of
“Rambles” to this series of “Recollections,”
I have been more honest by anticipation
than in execution ; for, though I have de-
tailed nothing that is not a reminiscence, I
have occasionally permitted my rambles to

extend to the *mind*—forgetting that remembrances of thoughts and sensations should not supersede sayings said and acts done. There are seasons when the thought—as well as the pen—becomes discursive, errant, fitful; and we no more can tie its wings from flight, or tether its feet from wandering, than we can alter the course of the wave, or change the tides. It is sweet to abandon our thoughts and our feelings to the impulse of that delicious, but somewhat dangerous witchery of fancy, which, at certain seasons, creeps over the faculties with the stealthy and silent step of a midnight lover. It is sweet to enfranchise from the chilling thralldom of callous custom and pert punctilio the wearied body, and still more wearied soul that inhabits it, and, bursting—like the waters of some pent-up pool, overthrowing in their headlong progress the

bulwarks which man had vainly erected to stem their course—from the restraining trammels of rule ; it is sweet to surrender the willing limbs and wayward mind to the subduing influences of nature, solitude, and reflection:

There are certain individuals, swathed in the swaddling-bands of stoicism, who profess to feel themselves alone in a crowd ; and who boast of the prerogative of excursive fancy even where gaiety sounds her merry summons, and where jollity holds his laughter-shaken sides. But, for my part, I cannot think in a throng. I cannot extricate my imagination from the links and chains of society. I must either join in the jest that circles around—fan the frolic that pervades the hall—or, in the dreamy stupor of physical dis-energy, sink into some quiet nook, where I may retain—undetected by

those who look not beyond the surface—the appearance without the reality of contemplation. Give me the wide freedom of the open plain—the chainless liberty of the unfrequented mountain, canopied by clouds, and lighted up by those beautiful and beneficent lamps, the stars—

“ Which are the poetry of heaven !”

Lead me—nay, I would not be *led* ; but let me seek the lonely prairie when morning tells the buffalo to crouch, after night-feeding, among the dewy grass ; or the sunset vale, where the rising moon flings her chaste alms of silver beams into the murmuring brook,—and my heart will send forth its urned thoughts—its garnered feelings—with the spontaneous freedom with which the glad earth renders up its bright array of

greenery and grace to the wooing freshness of spring. It is in the temple of Nature that the intellect discovers its own latent powers! It is in the field of Nature that it makes for itself space and scope wherein to luxuriate and flourish! and oh! it is in those serene hours which follow close upon the chaotic pleasures of the world, that the mind, matured for calm reflection, is best disposed to meditate on the bounty, the mercy, and the power of that Omniscient Being who created the whole!

But while I have been preparing the readers, who have had the patience to accompany me so far, for the nature of my lucubrations, by one of those *abandonments* to the feelings of the moment to which all of us are more or less subject, I must not altogether forget that my friend, Ibrahim Sha, is ready to prosecute his journey to Beeja-

pore, and that leaving Seedapore behind us, we are leisurely jogging, side by side in the grey dawn of day, along the narrow track across the hills by which it would be labour in vain to lead, any vehicle larger than a Lilliputian waggon. Oh! the refreshing coolness of those Indian mornings! when nature—after a long day's heat and a night's repose—arises, like a giant from his wine, with renewed life and vigour—arises in the springing flower, the soaring lark, the sky-scaling mist, the mounting sun!

A soft, cool breeze breathed gently around us, filling the frame with an elasticity of health that imparted to the spirits a sensation of intoxication, with which no mixture of sensuality mingled. The early birds of our Eastern land were beginning to chirrip about us: here and there a lark had left its bed in the grass, and was climbing the skies in full

song; rooks and jays were cawing and chattering in the mango and tamarind trees that encircled the village; parroquets and minas were screeching morning salutations to each other; and, from a tank in the distance, the curlew's harsh cry, and the bittern's boom, were heard as they splashed among the reeds in pursuit of the frog or water rat, or perhaps took flight from the fen-snake. The air was ever and anon freighted with the fragrance wafted to us from the jungle. Now came a full, suffocating gush of heavy odour from the white calices of the *datura*; then a grateful breath of aromatic medicine from the golden tassels of the *babool*, or gum-arabic tree; and anon, the spicy scent of the wood-apple leaves—something like a newly-broached flacon of anisette, floated like incense around us; while presently all, min-

gled together, wove an invisible web of perfume, which in combined sweetness surpassed all the subtlest distillations of sweet waters to be found at Houbigant's and Chardin's.

As we proceeded, too, in almost unbroken silence—busy with those thoughts that were engendered by the hour, the circumstance, and the coolness—other symptoms of life were stirring around us that, had I been—as alas ! I am not—a sportsman, would have lent a fresh charm to the scene. As we neared a stretch of table-land, a flock of spotted deer sprang before us—looking so spiritually beautiful in the rose-light of dawn as they bounded away—away—away to the remote woodlands, that I almost deemed them a phantom troop. Now and then a hare crossed our path ; and the quail, the plover, and the green pigeon, in frequent

succession, flew over-head ; while, as we threaded a thick patch of thorny acacias and hostile euphorbiums, near a *nulla*, or rivulet, a sudden grapple among the bushes startled us into visions of a cheeta, or panther ; but our apprehensions were speedily dispelled by the appearance of some six or seven jackals, grey and cowardly ; who favoured us, as they retreated at a brisk trot, with a long dissonant yell of dismay and displeasure.

“ *Dekho, sahib !*—behold, sir,” said Ibrahim Sha, as stooping down, he picked up a long silky substance, which at first I had nearly imagined to be gigantic jelly-bag of some giant house-keeper. It was the newly cast-off skin of a large serpent ; gauzy, bright, yet with a leprotic look about it, and a musky smell that made me, in my unparalleled, and to this day, unconquerable dread of snakes, shudder like an agueist.

“ *Be-shuk*...without doubt—the accursed creature is in that ant-hill,” he added, pointing to a large mound beside us. And, in truth, such accumulations of earth, often several feet in height and circumference—raised and cemented together into a loamy consistency by those singular little beings, the *termites*, or white ants, become, when deserted by them, the favorite asylum of snakes and other reptiles. On one occasion, (let me tell it *en paranthese*) I ordered a huge ant-hill on my premises to be dug up ; and in various compartments of it were discovered a cobra di capello, or hooded snake, the most venomous of all serpents ; thirteen black scorpions, one of them at least ten inches long—a guana, the species of lizard of which a delicious soup is made ; and a plentiful deposit of snake’s eggs !

As we drew near the village of Jynapore,

we crossed the Kistna river, then almost dry, for the hot season had exhausted its waters, and we waded it not knee-deep ; though during the *birsat*, or wet weather, it is one of the deepest and finest rivers in the presidency of Madras. Not, indeed, that its currents are confined to Madras, for it has its source in the Western Ghauts, in the province of Bejapoor, not fifty miles from the West coast of India, proceeding over a vast extent of country, not less than six hundred miles, to the Bay of Bengal, where its dark blue waters become lost. It derives its name, Kistna, or Krishna, from the black, or deep azure colour of its element ; or perhaps from Krishna, the favorite deity of the the gentler Hindoos—an incarnation of Vishnoo, the Preserver. The country about Jynapore appeared so little promissory of of pleasure, being bleak and stormy, that as

it was barely seven o'clock, I determined to go on seven miles further to Mahomedapore ; leaving the Fakeer to follow me in the afternoon ; and hiring a smart little Chowkra—boy—who stood by, to be my guide, while his mother, a respectable old dame of fifty summers, was busily employed over a fire, simmering in an iron pan a white, liquid paste—fated in the culinary operation to become a thick gluey cake. These cakes, compounded of rice-flower, milk, and a little salt, are very palatable when eaten hot with butter ; and the little lad, as he trotted on before me, seemed vastly to relish the one which maternal solicitude had provided him with, as we concluded our bargain.

The sun was hot and high ere we reached Mahomedapore—a picturesque place, and evidently, from the numerous old mosques, minarets, and ruinous edifices, formerly of

considerable consequence, though now fallen into decay. Situated in a thick grove, a very large tank of fine pellucid water—half a mile in circumference—flowed up to the dilapidated gates of the straggling town ; some of the houses in which still showed evidence of opulent inmates.

“ Where would you advsie me to put up, *bhaee*,—brother ?” said I to my guide, in the *patois* of the country.

“ *Hum Kya jani ?*—What do I know ?” was the reply.—“ *Gaon men serai hie ; goombooz bhie hie, aur ossturf ambari hie :*—There is a serai in the town,—a dome, or tomb,—and on the other side a grove of mango trees.” So I directed him to lead me to the latter, and finding it suited my purposes, gave him his eight annas—half a rupee—and dismissed him.

I was sitting under the mango trees that

surrounded my tent ; and, after a sultry day, enjoying the cool air of evening, when the sonorous voice of Ibrahim Sha, chaunting a dirge-like strain as he strode towards me, interrupted my thoughts ; and, hailing my worthy old friend, I invited him to sit beside me on the greensward.

“ *Aj Kya khubur, Fakeer-jee ?*—What news to-day, Sir Pilgrim ?” asked I.

“ *Ufsos !*—alas,” cried he,—“ the wind is heavy with lamentation, and there are no messages on it from the rose to the nightingale. The Thugs—may the dogs of Shytan defile their graves !—have been at work with my friends ; and worthy old Moostapha Khan, a rich merchant of Hydrabad, who has been missing for sometime, is supposed to have fallen by the execrable *roomal*—handkerchief.”

Now, it may be as well to apprise such

of my readers as have not perused Colonel Sleeman's official despatches regarding the system of Thuggee, or Captain Meadows Taylor's "Confessions of a Thug,"—or, what is still better, listened to the conversation *anent* them of my talented and able friend, Captain P. A. Reynolds, of Messrs. Grindlay's excellent East India Agency establishment, from whose ample stores of intelligence about a tribe, whom he was amongst the foremost and most efficient to trace out and, as it were, analyse, one might be inclined to guess much of the afore-mentioned "Confessions" had been gleaned—that this singular community of banded assassins, in their murderous depredations, never draw blood, invariably destroying the vital principle by strangulation. Even Eugene Sue, cleverest of modern French romancists, has had recourse to the authen-

tic documents of Colonel Sleeman, in the sketches of Thuggism he has introduced into his recent work—"Le Juif Errant."

The art of throwing the *roomal*, or noose (though *roomal* means handkerchief) with which the murder is effected, is one of great dexterity; and as difficult to manage as to throw the lasso: neither is it learnt without a long noviciate, for a knowledge of the complete profession of *Thuggee* is the labour of years, and conducted with systematic precision. From the confession of one Phansigar, or 'Thug Chief, it appears that he was present during the murder of *seven hundred and nineteen* persons; and I, myself, in 1835—saw at Guntoor, in the northern Circars, *one hundred and sixty Thugs*, working on the roads in fetters; the *Sirdar* or Chief of whom—was a venerable patriarchal

old man, who confessed to having been an expert *bhutote*—strangler—for *fifty years* !

“ Have any vestiges of your friend’s body been found, then ? demanded I.

“ Yes, sahib, at Omerawutty, where he was last seen, and where he passed some days with an old acquaintance. A favorite *Khunjur*—dagger—belonging to him and recognized by his friends, was found in the bed of a dry nulla eastward of the city : the sands near it, where it would appear that fires had been kindled, were dug up, and a body, in such an advanced state of decay as to render recognition impossible, discovered. He had gold and jewels to a considerable amount upon his person ; and his only attendant, whom he had left behind, enjoining him to follow on the succeeding day to the next stage, where he would await his coming, on reaching that place could obtain no information of him.”

"Then, Fakeer, I fear that all is over with poor Moostapha."

"The affair has caused a great sensation here, Sahib ; for the eldest son of Meer Jàn, the *Hakeem*—physician—who has been expected for the last week from Omerawutty, and who has considerable property with him, is still absent, nor have any tidings of him been received. A letter from his uncle, giving the above intelligence of Moostapha's fate, states that he left him ten days ago ; and as he was well mounted and resolved to make no delay, he should have been here some days back."

"May he not have fallen sick on the way ?"

"In that case he would have written, Sahib ; for his *shadee*—marriage—was to have taken place on his return, and he would not have willingly tarried an hour

longer than was necessary from his *doolhun*—bride. His brother, who is in the employ of the *Amuldar* (governor in charge of a district) of Beejapore, has been written to, with instructions to institute inquiries ; it was supposed he would have passed through Beejapore. A very fine gallant fellow was young Jaffer !”

“ And the bride ?” asked I.

“ The damsel is, I hear, a very *chumun*—flower garden of beauty. She is the orphan daughter of his maternal uncle ; and reared together in his father’s harem, a strong attachment has subsisted between them from earliest infancy. The poor girl is in a state of great distress ; and as the family is highly respected here, the anxiety regarding Jaffer’s fate is general.”

“ Poor fellow !” cried I. “ I hope the morrow’s breeze may waft to his friends, not

the breath of the cypress, but the perfumes of the lily. It was not, then, a ghuzel of love that you were singing, Ibrahim, as you approached ?”

“No, no, sir!” said the Fakeer. “I wish I could forget all the idle *rekias* and *roobais*—songs and sonnets—I not only sang, but composed in my youth ; but by the beard of Sadi, they continue to run in my stupid head still, whenever the flash of a dark eye shines upon me.”

“What !” exclaimed I, “are you also a *shaeer*—poet ?”

“Yekeen—assuredly—I have been called so before now ;” answered the Fakeer, with a sigh.—“My youth was a long dream of passionate folly, terminating in madness ; but *shookar-oollah*—thanks be to God, my age is more peaceful and happy than might have been anticipated from so stormy a

dawn. Oh, Sahib ! there are wild tides in the ocean that, after causing shipwreck and desolation, are sent by the mercy of Alla to some retired bay, on whose coasts they scatter pearls and precious shells for the starving beggar who expects them not ! The chant I was murmuring when I approached, was a *mursia*—elegy—which I composed for the last Mohurrim, at the request of the Mussulman sepoys of the Sahib's regiment."

Now, be it known to all my uninitiated readers, that the Mohurrim festival is held in great solemnity by all strict Mahomedans, in annual commemoration of the martyrdom of Hoossain and Hassan. On the last day of the festival, or *eed*, models of their tomb,—(their *taboot*)—composed *sometimes* of very splendid, *always* of very gaudy and glittering materials—are carried about in procession at night, by torchlight ; while

mummers, of all descriptions incidental to Oriental masquerade, dance round them with wild and frantic gestures—shouting the names of Ali, Hoosain, and Hassan ; and chanting to the sounds of tom-toms, nakaras, and horns, melancholy dirges, descriptive of the sufferings and death of the martyrs. The scene, to a stranger, has a wild and picturesque fascination about it that cannot be described. Masquers, in the different costumes of the various sects of fakeers, are grouped grotesquely around ; lights, red, blue, and green, are burnt with a profusion and effect that would do credit to a modern melodrama ; and pits—dug here and there in the streets—are filled with combustibles ; round which, when kindled, bacchantic dancers, linked hand in hand, perform a maniacal dance, accompanied by piercing shouts, that would make the success of a

new ballet, could they be transported to the *Bunnish* stage of Drury.

“ You must let me hear your marsia, my friend,” pleaded I.

Ibrahim Sha’s voice was well modulated, and a solemn awe filled my mind as he chanted with expressive vehemence and wild feeling the following words,—by me inadequately tortured into English :

‘ ALLAH-HOO AKBAR, the Only, the Just !
The sire of the orphan, the shield of our trust !
The mighty ! the merciful ! potent to save—
The staff of the sultan—the stay of the slave !
Our nurse in the cradle, our prop in the womb,
Our shepherd thro’ life, and our life in the tomb !
On the rites of our grief cast thy sacred beam—
*Bismilla-hir-ruhman-nirr-ruheem ! **

* “ In the name of God, the most merciful of the merciful.”

" The tyrants have conquer'd—the martyrs have died,

And the green earth is stained with the blood from their side ;

The martyrs have died a red death upon earth,
And the tyrants have shouted their signals of mirth;
The tyrants have shouted in glee—but ere long
The fiends of Eblees will extinguish their song,
While the martyrs shall sing by the Holy Stream,
Bismilla-hir-rukma-nirr-ruheem !

" Hoossain ! Hassan !—their wrongs proclaim
Thro' the clarion of woe and the trumpet of shame
Tho' houris attend them, their fate still on earth
Is wailed by the Faithful ; and no sounds of mirth
Shall blend with the plaint of the Mursia-song
That bursts from the wild and the frantic throng :

" Julalia ! Julalia !" let the fires gleam—

Bismilla-hir-rukma-nirr-ruheem !

" 'Tis the midnight watch ! let the torches glare,

And the Taboot glance in the dazzled air ;

Dance wildly round, and chaunt the while,

Till Echo respond for many a mile.—

Alminatu-lillahi, Mahommud Russool !—

The benzoin smells sweet in the night air cool ;

And the lights of heaven on our orgies stream—

Bismilla-hir-rukma-nirr-ruheem !

By the time the fakeer had concluded his prolonged wail the night had fallen thick and dark around us ; here and there, amidst the groups of trees, might be seen a little watch-fire ; round which were moving a few confused shapes, unrecognizable in the gloom, and looking witch-like through the foliage ; but, in fact, being merely travellers, like ourselves, bivouacking for the night, and kindling their sudden hearths to prepare their evening rice.

As Ibrahim arose to retire, making his parting salaam with a fervent *khooda-hafez*—God protect you!—the moon began to dissipate the momentary gloom of the scene—shedding a bright glory over the grove ; and long after he had left me, and indeed until reminded by my faithful Malliapa—my confidential servant—that the morrow's walk was a long one, I sat beneath the

mango tree, plunged in thought, and most sentimentally gazing on the moon—just as if I had never seen it before.

But, in truth, I know not that there is anything in nature more soothing to the excited mind than the contemplation of the moon—sailing like some planetary barque amidst a sea of bright azure. The subject is certainly as hackneyed as new fledged poetasters and butter-and-bread misses can make it. Is there any marvel it should be so? Is it possible that the most glorious ornament of the firmament, the regal lamp of night, could remain undescanted on by all who can, or who think they can, which is not exactly the same thing, breathe forth their admiration of its charms in poetical prose, or prosaic verse? Rather say, that he who has never looked upon her light save as a lanthorn to warn his foot from the ditch

whose mud clogs his very soul, hath not the spirit of poetry, nay, nor of piety, within him !

She never shone forth—that splendid Cynthia—in more effulgent pomp, than she did that night over the mango-topes of Mahomedapore ; and the mild silvery radiance, which she flung over the mountains in the distance, whose peaks towered above the tree tops, appeared as if it were the shadowy reflex of the etherial wings of some angel, who has stooped in the hush of night to gaze with pity on a world of misery. A calm repose—rich, delicious, and soothing—stole over me as I watched her brilliant course : soothing it was, yet not unmixed with pensiveness ; a melancholy, however, far more exquisite than mirth in its wildest mood. Do we not always, when we contemplate the moon in perfect loneliness,

revert almost mechanically, only that nothing so pleasant *can* be mechanical, to former days, former joys, former sorrows! to the past rather than to the future, while the present is quite forgotten? It is ever thus with me. I never behold its pale light, beautiful though pale—like the wan beauty of a dying girl—without the memory of some blissful moment of by-gone years. It comes fluttering before me—that memory—like a lovely bird of passage! It may be the recollection of some happy ramble beneath a moonlight like this, with a cherished friend, now absent or dead, or, worse still, estranged! It may be the remembrance of some boyish prank in an hour as tranquil; or perhaps the aching reminiscence of a sad farewell uttered in such a moment, with a heart—with *hearts*—distracted by the anguish that cannot speak! Alas! such a

farewell, in such a night, with the same sad light gleaming over us—(our fancies then compared it to a death-lamp over a lover's tomb,) has passed my lips ; a farewell which was indeed a last one ! But the time has not yet come for me to record it.

CHAPTER VI.

HOME-THOUGHTS IN EXILE.—FANCIES ABOUT
FLOWERS.—THE ARM AND THE RING.—THE
FATE OF THE THUGS.—JAFFER AND ZULEIKA.

Our walk on the following day to Sarwar was hot and dusty, for prolonged slumbers had made it late, nor could we find green bower nor cool kiosk at that place—which was a filthy, bare village, deficient in all attractions, and, above all, in tolerable water : that which was procured from some *bowries* (large wells, dug deep and built in,

so as often to form handsome and striking objects) being muddy and brackish.

The Fakeer left me to proceed to Beejapore, where he had promised to give counsel and assistance to Hassan Ali in his researches after his brother, Jaffer, the suspected victim of the Thugs. Scarcely had my venerable guide departed ere I regretted that I did not accompany him ; for, whether owing to the heat, which was intense ; to a draught of saline water ; or to other causes, I know not ; but I was seized with violent sickness which, in my alarm, I imagined to be cholera. My Maty, (and here again let me record the name of the most faithful, most honest, most attached of domestics, in that of Malliapah, the Paria) prevailed upon me to swallow a *quid* of salt, cardamom, cloves, and other spiceries, rolled up in a betel leaf ; from which, and

a hot bath, I derived real benefit ; but I resolved on deferring my walk of nine miles to Beejapore till the cool of the following afternoon : at which time feeling perfectly recovered, I walked off, staff in hand—keeping in advance of my small retinue for a mile or two, when coming upon a pretty stretch of scenery, I indulged myself in a short halt, and began to rummage about for plants ; for amongst my other manias was a passion for botany, and an ambition to possess an ample *hortus siccus*. Picking a few wild flowers, I flung myself upon a bank, and sank into a reverie that completely steeped me into oblivion of time and place. How often are the dreams of the exile thus nurtured and excited by some unknown agency, until before him home and its accessories arise, and his only consciousness of the “ ignorant present ” springs from the

vague knowledge that the past is *behind him!*

“ Home ! home ! ” exclaimed I—“ word that keeps the sanctuary of the heart when all else that sounds like comfort is excluded ! Oh ! for a home on British ground ! when pain fills my frame, when the uncertainty of recovery saddens me, when the unripeness of the spirit for the great harvest of souls startles me into reflection, how acutely does the memory of my country burn within me ! Once more to tread the path that leads to the home of my youth—once more to hear a mother’s blessings—to feel a mother’s endearment—to listen to holy words of consolatory prayer over my homely bed, and methinks the spirit would cheerfully take its flight ! ”

Could my thoughts at that moment have continued to find a voice, as my eyes rested on the plants I had gathered and the shrubs

around me, they would have been syllabled somewhat in the following manner :---“ For more than two years I have not seen a rose !” The “gardens of Gul” are certainly not extant in this our cruelly-styled ‘ Benighted Presidency ;’ and oh ! how---with a very woman’s longing---do I yearn to inhale that fairest flower’s perfume ! Our gardens here (and my mind’s eye, shutting itself upon the jungulf, took in the far off gardens of Madras and Bangalore) are nevertheless full of the most beautiful shrubs ; but I content myself with admiring them ; I value them not, unlinked with any associations of affection. They are dewed with no fond remembrance of the past ; and an odour ---like a melody, or the tone of a voice, may be fraught with thoughts

“ that lie too deep for tears !”

The *Plumiera Alba* is a voluptuous thing, rich and arabesque in its appearance, and redolent of fragrance :—in good sooth I prefer our English Hawthorn ! What can be more magnificent than the gorgeous papilionaceous blossoms of those Cesalpinies, orange, and gold, and white ? Nothing ; yet would I liefer choose the richly scented, rarely-tinted spikes of our homely lilach. Here are Neriums ; rose-hued and white, sweet to smell, and venomous withal : give me the honey-suckle instead ! Is not that the sweet-basil, rife with its associations of Boccaccio and Keats ? and is not this the sacred *toolasi*, (*Ocymum Sanctum*) ? Both have their peculiar and incense-like smell, and are worthy to strew before an Idol, or upon a grave ; yet I better love the bee-worshipped wild thyme, or the wizard Ver-

vain, which "was one of the plants of the Druids, and was considered a charm to conciliate friendship."

"Here are spicy myrtles, growing in profusion and of gigantic proportions—each bush a thicket; nevertheless, methinks I prefer the furze, which in summer and autumn dresses itself from top to toe in an armour of burnished gold, and in spring dons a garb of green. Yonder is a heap of cassias, (and in truth the spot where I sat was surrounded by them), *auriculata*, *sophora*, and *tora*—for it is a numerous family—looking in the distance like our own broom; almost, mind ye, I say *almost*, as lovely. The resemblance, and much of their elegance, diminish as we approach them. Blue ruellias, the yellow tribulus, with its contorted thorns cursing poor camel feet, the clammy

pedalium murex, snelling like musk and with blossoms like a primrose, the vermilion viola suffruticosa, the thistle-like argemone mexicana with its superb corols of yellow petals and ruby anthered stamens, but scenting vilely—vile even as our senecio jacobæa-ragwort, or as our Scottish peasantry broadly call it “*stinking willy* ;” (wherefore *Willy*, that dearest name ?) ; and a thousand other plants are around me, all lovely. But of those none strike me as being so elegant with such a *home-look* about it, as the evolvalus alsinoides, which is assuredly very like the cherished forget-me-not. Perhaps when I have left these Asiatic herbs behind me for ever, I may regret them, and love them better ; for that separation is a violent strengthener of affection, who will deny ? When the kindly feelings are strong, we remember the more acutely the farther we

are removed from the objects that interested us : otherwise---why we forget them, and we miss a pang or two !”

Thus soliloquizing mentally, I sat till my Maty reminded me of the lapse of time ; and bidding him call me in another half hour if I did not then join him, I strolled away again.

A little brook, winding and twisting through bush and brake, with the graceful facility of a serpent, descended a gradual eminence, at the base of which halted my attendants, who had all come up. While mounting the ascent I found that behind it lay a considerable stretch of jungle ; beyond which extended the long dreary plain of Sarwar, on which the only thing that could be discovered like vegetation was the hard, hispid spear-grass, and here and there a scattered clump of acrid, ragged euphorbias.

Down in the stream, which here grew wider, I saw a jackal stoop to drink ; but when I shouted loudly, it suddenly withdrew into the brushwood. Among the bushes to which he had retreated, I detected one which was not familiar to me, whose boughs were densely draped with a covering of bright purple blossoms, in my covetousness of which I sprang at once into the thicket, regardless of lurking snake or cowardly jackal.

I had possessed myself of my treasure, and was rounding the circle which the stream here took, in order to reach the plain without again climbing the ascent, when three other jackals started from a thick clump of the Webera shrub through which I was forcing my way ; two of these fled, but the third, loth to leave its prey—for it bore in its mouth what appeared to

me to be part of some dead animal—trotted off more slowly ; looking sulkily at me, as if half disposed to question my right of intrusion on his premises. Giving a sudden bark as I approached, the creature fled affrighted—dropping what was literally the “ bone of contention ” right in my path ; while presently the whole pack bayed aloud in the thickets around. As I came up to the abandoned banquet, I started—for it took the form of a *human arm* ! and sure enough, to my great horror, there it lay... mangled, black, and bloody...with half the flesh gnawed away, and on one of the two remaining fingers of the hand a *signet-ring of red cornelian* !

I cannot describe the mingled sensations of wonder, disgust, dismay, that seized me, as wrapping my handkerchief round the unseemly limb, I lifted it from the ground

and hurried away from the spot ; giving, as I went, a hasty glance around, with a vague idea of beholding the body of the hapless wretch whose remains were thus desecrated by the denizens of the woods. But I saw nothing, nor did I slacken my pace until I reached my servants, whose horror at sight of the loathsome freight I bore, almost amused me from the amount of superstition and childish apprehension with which it was mixed. That a murder had been perpetrated had not at first struck me ; I had merely conjectured that some poor creature, dying from sudden disease and cast out without burial...or but imperfectly interred and torn from his shallow grave by beasts of prey, had been conveyed to these thickets from some distant place of sepulture. Such sights, during a season of cholera, or famine, are but too common in the upper pro-

vinces of India ; but my Maty pointed to the ring of rich gold on the finger, the cornelian stone of which was impressed with Arabic characters ;...and the words... "Phansigar ! Thug !" arose on every lip ! If, indeed, this were the work of the Thugs, how had the ring escaped detection ? At that moment how did I wish for the presence of Ibrahim Sha ; and how little did I anticipate that amongst the group of travellers which we saw advancing towards us, I should have that wish fulfilled.

"Look, sir," cried Malliapah, in his broken English, "plenty, too much people coming ; and I think the Fakeer is there, beside the man on the top of the horseback."

In fact, some ten or twelve men, consisting chiefly of Peons, for the greater part of them wore official belt sand badges, while all were armed, approached at a brisk

pace, led on by a young Mussulman of a noble presence, at whose side walked stoutly and nimbly our friend Ibrahim Sha. As they drew near, I observed that they intently regarded me ; and from the halt and respectful "*salaam*" with which they saluted me, as they came up, I knew that the good Fakeer had spoken my *éloge*.

"What is the matter, my friend?" said I, to him.

"Khodawund," replied he, "you behold my young friend Hassan Ali, of Beejapore whose brother Jaffer has fallen by the accursed noose of the Phansigars : may their bones be defiled ! Information has reached him that a troop of Thugs, proceeding from Omera to Poona, had been traced to Chingole, the hamlet behind yon hill. A *dhobee*---washerman---who was washing in this brook, which runs through the village,

saw two or three suspicious looking men, who were strangers to him, pass through Chingole a few mornings ago ; and undetected by them, as they stooped for a moment to drink, crouched behind a bush and overheard part of their conversation. Much of it was carried on in that jargon peculiar to the Thugs, but he gleaned from their discourse that a young Mahomedan, mounted on a fine horse, had been consigned to the care of two of their *bhutotes*, or stranglers ; while a third was to dog them, in order to carry off the steed. One of the men asked the other if they were to join their comrades at the Soorun jungle, which is the stretch of wood the Sahib has just passed ; but the others replied in the negative, adding that the Mussulman was in sure hands, and that their Sirdar's orders were for them to proceed at once to Poona, there to join him and await

the others. We are now, sahib, going to search the Soorun jungle, which runs from this thicket behind you up to Chingole."

It was the very thicket I had so recently traversed, and a sudden thought crossed me.

"Will the Fakeer-jee lend me the ears of attention behind the curtain of privacy for one minute?" asked I.

Ibrahim Sha, with a look of astonishment, instantly drew aside, when beckoning Malliapah to bring the basket in which we had deposited the mangled limb, I slowly lifted the handkerchief that covered it.

"*Punnah ba khooda!*—God protect us!" ejaculated the Fakeer,... "what ghoul's food is this?"

In as few words as might be I told him what had occurred, and how I had come by the terrible proof of a bloody deed now before us.

"*Al hoomd ool-illa!*"...Praise be to Allah!—exclaimed he, it is the arm of poor Jaffer which the sahib has rescued me from the jackals: his brother will doubtless recognize the ring. Ai, sahib, Allah has chosen you to be the instrument of this discovery; you will not refuse to renew the search for the rest of poor Jaffer's body. But let us apprise Hassan."

In short, with kind and cautious accents, the Fakeer related the strange event that had befallen me; upon which Hassan Ali, rushing forward to examine the hacked and abhorrent limb, instantly recognised the signet ring of his brother, on the fore-finger. Although he had for several days discarded all hopes of finding that brother alive, this unshakeable evidence of his death so deeply affected him that his sobs could not be restrained; and in awe-struck silence the

whole party bent their heads, in touching sympathy with his grief.

“My brothers,” at length said the Fakeer, interrupting this solemn scene, “time departs, and our task is but begun ; the nights are however short, and we have still some hours of daylight before us ; but delay is useless. The *Ingrezi* (English) officer has a lucky foot as has been proved to us—and he has promised to lead us to the spot where, most probably, our beloved Jaffer...peace be with him ! was slain.”

“I will not leave you,” said I, “till we see the end of this business.”

“*Shookur ! salaam !* thanks !” shouted the group ; while Hassan Ali, springing towards me with an impulse he could not resist, and with an explosion of emotion to which the Moselmin seldom gives way before a Christian, put his arms around

me and, without a single word embraced me.

Bidding my servants proceed on to Beejapore and await me there at the great mosque, while Hassan commanded one of his peons to accompany them, I led the way to the fatal thicket. Hassan Ali, who had dismounted at our first introduction, kept close by me, ever and anon taking my hand and giving it a fervent pressure ; nor was it long ere again the rush of jackals from the brushwood assured us we were near their prey. Piercing the patch of thick thorny Webera bushes I had formerly passed unsearched, we descended a steep, loamy bank, at the bottom of which we came upon a dark, dismal gap, where lay strewn the mangled body of a human being ; so disfigured that no trace of features was distinguishable on the ghastly countenance ; while, at a short distance, floating in a deep

muddy pool of stagnant water, entangled among pond weeds, sat bolt upright the corpse of a man ! His head, divested of turban, stuck hideously from between his two upraised arms, that seemed to be supported in that position by the water-weeds ; whilst, upon his naked shoulders, croaked a huge vulture, which had already deprived his sockets of their eyeballs ; but at our approach, the gorged and unclean bird slowly and heavily flew away. As the body swayed to and fro in the wind that agitated the interlacing weeds, an appearance of life was imparted to it that caused an universal shudder to creep through the veins of the beholder. It was evident, from the marks up to the very edge of the murky pool, that the baffled jackals had made vigorous efforts to share in the loathsome banquet, of which we found the vulture sole occupant ; and

traces of human feet all around, in the moist and clayey soil, indicated that a struggle had taken place ; while not far from the disembowelled and mutilated corpse—deficient, as we had expected, in one arm—lay the *roomal*, the fatal handkerchief of slaughter !

“How, then,” exclaimed we—for the same thought moved us—“how then did Jaffer contrive to rid himself of the roomal from his throat ere he expired ?”

“*Haef!* alas !” said the Fakeer, “perhaps these accursed jackals, in their fierce contention over the body, tore away the noose from his neck : and this corpse in the water is most probably that of his *syce*—groom. But let us gather up those melancholy relics. Approach, oh ! Coolies,” continued he, to some workmen who had attended them from Beejapore. As these

coolies, or porters, turned over the body for removal, a small dagger of Damascus steel was observed sticking in the side of the corpse, between the ribs that protect the heart!

“It was my last gift to Jaffer!” cried Hassan, “but oh, Allah, wonders increase. Who ever heard of a Thug’s drawing blood, or using steel?”

“*Be Shuk*—without doubt”—said the Fakeer, “the roomal was not expertly thrown; your brother had escaped from it, and with his own weapon they completed their work!”

Coinciding in this opinion, a bier of boughs was quickly constructed, on which the remains of Jaffer and the body of the supposed groom, on whom nothing but common garments and the silver ring of a peasant were found—were laid, for the purpose of being conveyed to the hamlet of Chingole,

which was but two short miles from us. The nearest way lay through stunted but thick jungle, and was scarcely a foot track ; but as Ibrahim Sha knew it, we resolved on taking it, whilst Hassan's horse was sent round by the common road.

We had proceeded perhaps a mile—our progress much impeded by the nature of the ground and the intricacy of the bushes when suddenly pausing, the Fakeer, who was in advance of the party, raised his hands with a silencing gesture, and uttered the word "*Kamoosh* !—silence !" Halting at the signal, he pointed to the left, whence presently we could discern a thin vapoury thread of smoke issue above the trees ; indicating the vicinity of human beings.

"Hush !" whispered he ; "perhaps the abominable hounds are cooking their unholy victuals here."

“They would scarcely have remained so long in this neighbourhood,” interposed I; “the deed must have been done several days ago.”

“The Sahib is right,” said he; “—but ho! *yeh koun hi? Allah moobarak! Bhái, Rajoo kulal! yehan kya karta hie?* Who is this? Blessed Allah, brother Rajoo, what are you doing here?”

And with these words we became aware of the presence of an elderly man, of respectable appearance, who, crouching down among the underwood, was stripping the luscious viscid fruit of the Mahwa tree of its husks, on a mat extended before him. Now, be it known to my readers, that from this sweet nauseous, but vinous berry—the fruit of the *Bassia latifolia*—a strong arrackey liqueur is distilled by the *kulals*, or spirit-brewers.

"Thanks be to God," cried the old man, rising; "that it is you, and that there are honest folk in your company; for these places have of late been polluted by *Bhanchoot soors*---cursed swine---of thieves."

"*Ufsoos!*" said Ibrahim Sha, "pointing to the bearers, who now came up with their ghastly burthen---" "look here!"

The Kulal gave a sort of hysteric scream, and to our unutterable astonishment, with that most eloquent expression of disgust peculiar to the Asiatic---an ejection of the saliva---exclaimed:--

"I spit upon such dogs' carcasses. Are ye dewana---mad---to carry about in procession the bodies of two abominable Thugs, as if they were the relics of martyred saints?"

"What mean you?" cried the Fakeer.

"I mean," answered the Kulal, "that

these are the corpses of two unclean murderers ; and that by the favour of Allah, I was the humble means of assisting in the escape of a worthy gentleman who had almost fallen their victim."

These words created a strange sensation in our little circle. The bearers flung down the litter and its load with a loathing shudder ; the Fakeer gazed at the Kalal as if he doubted whether he was in his proper senses ; whilst Hassan Ali fell on his knees, and, with clasped hands, was about to speak, when a faint muffled voice was heard :—

" *Rajoo, bhat humara ! thora panee pila deo !...* Rajoo, my brother, give me a little water to drink."

Up started at these words the kneeling Hassan, and with a burst of joy that can never pass away from my memory, darting

towards the little underground cell in which the Kulal carried on his distillery, exclaimed :

“ Jaffer, my brother ! where art thou ? Hassan, your Hassan is here ! Thank God, thank God ! ”

* * * * *

Touching such incidents as the above, the briefest explanations are the best. Suffice it, then, to say that Jaffer, delayed on his journey by the laming of his horse, was obliged to leave it in charge of his groom to follow in the rear ; and joining some travellers, whose appearance seemed respectable, to shorten his way determined to avoid Beejapore. His anxiety to return to his betrothed was the means of betraying him into the snare which had been prepared for him by his companions. Fortunately for

him, as they drew near Chingoli, intelligence reached their chief of a richer prize, in a direction remote from the village ; and he was consigned to the tender mercies of two *bhutotes*—stranglers ; his groom, meanwhile, having undergone the death-ordeal of the *roomal*, at the place where he had left him. The Soorun jungle was the spot agreed on by his companions ; and the darkness of night had fallen thick around ere...involved as if accidentally in its intricacies...they proposed to kindle a fire and remain there till dawn. The consent of their victim given, a fire was lit, and after eating some parched grain, they suggested that a few hours' repose might be indulged in. Jaffer was almost asleep, when he felt the signet-ring cautiously withdrawn from his finger ; and starting up, the *roomal* was thrown round his neck. Of the dreadful struggle that

ensued; his recollections and ideas were faint and confused : some inexperience in the throwing of the handkerchief, and the obscurity of the night, led to the struggle and were the occasion of his providential escape. He heard the *bhutote* summon his comrade to assist him ; that comrade's voice in reply conveyed a warning of coming foot-steps ; a plunge into water followed. Doubtless, the confederate, in hastening to assist the struggling *bhutote*, had been precipitated into the pool where we found him. The struggle continued, and Jaffer was almost suffocated, when his right hand coming in contact with his dagger, he drew it, and with a last effort plunging it into the side of the Thug as he leant over him, sank into insensibility. The advancing footsteps which had alarmed the confederates were those of the Kulal and his son. The Thugs

invariably spare certain classes ; among these are dancing-girls, fakeers, washermen, and kulals ; the kulal therefore was under no apprehensions for himself or son, when he heard the sounds of the struggle that was going on ; but, desirous of rendering assistance to the victim, he whispered to his son to make as much noise as possible in order to alarm the Thugs, and the stratagem was successful. The sudden silence that succeeded—broken only by the last efforts of the drowning wretch to release himself from the weedy pool—gave the Kulal courage to approach. He found Jaffer lifeless, half strangled ; while beside him, struck instantly dead by that one well-directed blow, weltered in his blood the *bhutote* !

The moon had now arisen, and the insensible form of Jaffer was conveyed by Rajoo and his son to their subterrene hut, where

for three days the sufferer contended with death ; but the careful kindness of nature assisted by the judicious management of the worthy Kulals, were finally triumphant ; nor can I better conclude my sketch than by assuring my readers, that in after years, I had full cognizance of the perfect happiness of Jaffer Ali and his bride, while their obligations to old Rajoo and his son were never forgotten.

CHAPTER VII.

BEEJAPORE.—OLD WOMEN, NO. 2.—THE MADUR-
I-GHOUL AND HER STORY.—THE FAMINE.

THE reader who is desirous of ascertaining the whereabouts of Beejapore, or Bejapoor, will find from Hamilton's East India Gazeteer, that it is the capital of the province of that name, latitude $17^{\circ} 9' N.$ —longitude $75^{\circ} 42' E.$ When taken by Aurungzebe, A. D. 1689, it stood on an extensive plain, the fort being one of the largest in the world. Between

it and the city wall there was room for fifteen thousand cavalry to encamp; within the citadel was the king's palace, the houses of the nobility, and large magazines, besides many extensive gardens, and round the whole a deep ditch always well supplied with water; there were also without the walls very large suburbs and noble palaces. After its capture the water of the reservoirs and wells in the fort decreased, and the country round became waste to a considerable distance. At present it exhibits almost nothing but ruins, which however prove the vast magnitude of this city during its prosperous state." But—to leave Hamilton—I now begin to quote from my own memoranda, written on the spot.

"I am at Beejapore, in the city of the shadows of departed kings. In such a place as this, society would be a mockery, and I

can enjoy the solitude even to desperation. I gaze around me and view nothing but desolation. I hear nothing but the croak of the raven, and the twitter of the small birds among the twining plants that clamber over the dismantled ruins around me. Kings have reigned here in splendour, luxury, and tyranny. Victory has waved her banners from the turrets of these crumbling palaces ; and assassination has stalked, like an accursed spirit, among the now dilapidated walls. It was here that the princes of the Adil Shahee dynasty ruled in the zenith of their glory, and from that altitude of power saw themselves sink into nothingness.

“ What is that superb building ?” asked I, of an old man whom I met as I wandered about.

“ ‘ It is the *Burra Goombooz*—the Great Dome, sahib ; the Mahmood Roza, or man-

soleum of Mahmood.' It is a fine building, a worthy tomb for a king. It is a hundred and fifty three feet square, over which soars a dome, a hundred and seventeen feet in diameter; the cupola—larger than that of St. Paul's—gives an air of crowning glory to the edifice, which also contains a whispering gallery. Mahmood Sha, the Sultan whose memento it is, died in 1660. But a still more elegant structure is the mosque and mausoleum of Ibrahim Adil Sha, the second king of that name, and father of Mahmood.

The Ibrahim Roza may not be so strikingly grand in appearance, but it is more exquisitely finished, and the cupola of more elegant construction. It contains the remains of the Sultan, his mother, wife, daughter, and two sons: the mosque attached to it is a very handsome structure. The next tomb of any importance is that of Ali

Adil Sha, fifth King of Beejapore ; who in 1580, was assassinated by an eunuch ; in his reign the great wall round the city was finished, which was commenced in 1509. I could not penetrate into the *Ussur mahal*—a very handsome palace—since it was kept locked by order of the British resident ; it is said to contain an elegantly illuminated copy of the Koran, and a casket which preserves in its close keeping some hairs from the beard of the prophet, presented to Ibrahim Adil Sha by a holy Seyd, and which that Sultan kept in a shrine of gold set with jewels.

“ The inner fort was kept exclusively for the palaces of the kings, and is now a heap of ruins. The fort itself now contains several distinct villages, or hamlets ; and although so great a part is covered with ruins, there is still room found for some corn

fields and extensive enclosures. The inner fort is more than a mile in circumference, appearing but a speck in the larger one, which, in its turn, is almost lost in the space occupied by the outer wall of the city.

“ I have pitched my tent in the square of the Grand-Mosque, but only make it my dormitory, for I sit all day inside the Mosque, where it is delightfully cool among the solemn arches. In the evening I ascend to the top of the dome, whence the view is charming. The interior of the Burra-Musjid—or Great Mosque, is very imposing ; the front part contains seventy-nine lines of squares, or spaces for Praying-Carpets—each line containing from 28 to 30 ; thus, there is room for about 2375 individuals to pray in a kneeling position, without being over-crowded. The length of the centre or

front façade is 95 paces—the breadth 54—and it is supported by 36 arches.

“ I have now been three days here, and am untired of my solitude. I rambled till dusk last evening among the ruins in the fort, and I could not help occasionally fancying that I was transformed into one of Mrs. Radcliffe’s heroes, wandering among piles of haunted ruins, and vainly searching for some lost dear one in the dusky caverns around. Everything was tinged with the most vivid colours of romance : the Gothic Moorish buildings, with their mouldering spires and minarets glowing in the golden sunset—the old trees, gnarled and grey of trunk, but still green of leaf, like ancient men with the flowing bright hair of youth—the parasite plants that trailed up and down and all athwart the crumbling walls, sometimes half-hiding from view the sinister

mouth of some dark abyss, or cell—now the noisome haunt of the snake, or its deadly foe, the *mungoos*, or ichnumen;—the owls and night-hawks, which, disturbed by my tread, flitted past me with a cry of terror;—everything recalled some of those entrancing fictions which have often held me in sweet thralldom over a cosy fire in Scotland—long, long ago, on some winter night! One dilapidated turret, picturesquely nodding over the ramparts of the fort, tempted me to invade its dangerous ascent; which I found a task of some difficulty, for the steps were in many instances totally gone—far apart—and tottered beneath my weight. On reaching the small circular and only remaining chamber at top, I found it occupied by—a *goat*! The simple animal was quietly plucking the scanty herbage that grew in the interior from the fissures of the

walls ; and its scared look of wonder was in itself a subject for a painter, without the rich aid of the scenery around. As I sat, on my return to the Mosque, with a cup of fragrant Mocha before me, I hastily composed the following :

STANZAS.

I see but wild ruins around,—
And palaces, gardens, and towers,
Whose roofs, once so soaring, now stoop to the ground,
Embraced by rude wilderness flowers :
I see nought but ruins around,
But ruins superb and sublime ;
And bastions and battlements cover the ground,
Sad offerings to war and to Time.
I hear but the shriek of the crow,
As it soars to the dome of the Mosque ;
While echo repeats the harsh accents below,
And murmurs in yonder kiosk.
I hear but the night-raven's scream,
And the twitter of sparrows that play
'Mid the clambering shrubs, that so languidly stream
O'er yon arches, fast mouldering away !

For the voice of creation is still,
And the hum of mankind now no more.
Resounds on the air. Oh ! the heart feels a thrill,
Like the exile's who treads a lone shore !
Yet here have the tones of the proud
And the powerful and wealthy been heard ;
And Princes—long wrapt in the sepulchre's shroud—
Have ruled where now screams the night-bird.
And tyrants have issued the sign
That doomed to the bowstring or sword,
From that spot where slow creeps, in the moon's silver
shrine,
The snake, its sole master and lord —
And there the Seraglio. Lo, now
Sweet voices no longer ring there ;
And beauty hath ceased to distribute its glow
On these walls, ragged, riven, and bare !
Nor envy. nor pining decay,
Nor ambition exist in these halls ;
For the sighs of the sad and the smiles of the gay
Are unheard and unseen 'neath their walls :—
Yet there, still, in grandeur sublime,
Its cupola piercing the skies,
In haughty defiance of ruin and time,
See the " Mosque " in proud beauty arise !
But there—even there, where once pray'd
The Moslem,—the Infidel now
Reposes, and 'neath its arcade
Bids the red wine unholily flow !

And there the Muezzin now calls

With a voice, low and plaintive, "to prayer ;"
For the myriads who once sought, in silence, those
walls,

No longer in suppliance bend there !
And such is the fate that attends

The fairest creations of Man ;
His buildings, his conquests, his workmanship, lend
Their glory to brighten a span.

Farewell to thee, city once proud,
Lone spectre of grandeur and might,
Pale ruin hath covered thy corpse with its shroud,
And buried thy triumphs in night.

* * * * *

It was on one of those glorious evenings which occasionally succeed a day of intense heat, ending in a sudden shower, that I sallied out from the Musjid for a long walk among the ruins. I had not far to go to avoid the eyes of inquisitive observers, and ere long I found myself quite alone. A solitary herd, tending a few sheep and goats for lack of other employ ; an old woman collecting brushwood

for fuel, or a boy or two, playing at hide and seek among old walls and shattered porticos were all that met my sight as I skirted the walls of the city, traversed the intermediate space that divided me from the inner part, and entered that desolate "citadel of the silent." Now and then, a faint, cool breeze came tampering with the leaves of the peeples (*Ficus religiosa*), tamarind, and other trees that grew profusely around; birds fluttered past from spray to spray, a lizard glistened across the path and was gone, and butterflies of every imaginable tint darted before me, like fairy pilots; while all about wandered the rich perfume of the mendhee bushes (*Lawsonia inermis*) in full bloom. From one of these a veiled woman, apparently of some condition from the texture of her raiment, was picking the budding leaves and shoots into a *soop*, sort

of shallow basket. As I came upon her somewhat suddenly, she started, uttered an exclamation of alarm, and hid her already sufficiently concealed face in the foliage.

“*Durro mud!* do not let me terrify you ; said I.—“I am neither the *Ghowl-i-beeaban*, nor an *afreet*.” (Now, the former is a horrible phantom of the vampire order, and is supposed to feed upon the bodies of the dead : while the latter is, with different attributes of evil, equally to be eschewed by all respectable people). She made no answer.

“*Beebee* (lady), why are you afraid of me ? I am only an English soldier.”

“You are a—*Kafir*,” said a soft sweet voice ; “but I am an old woman and I am not afraid of him who is the friend of the Fakeer, Ibrahim Sha.”

“ You know me, then ?”

“ I have heard of you, Sahib. My mistress, who is also my foster-child, is the wife of Hassan Ali, whose brother Jaffer was so nearly slain by the Thugs.”

“ And these leaves are for your toilet ?”
I said, as she continued to pick them from the bush with fingers of the most fairy proportions, wonderfully young-looking and fresh for an old woman !

“ Nay, Sahib, said I not that I was aged ? I have long ceased to anoint myself with unguents or cosmetics ; but I must not tarry to converse with a stranger. You said, Sahib, that you were not a *ghowl*, but you may probably fall in with the Mother of the Ghowsls if you proceed far.”

“ Who is she ?” cried I.

But with a negative shake of her hand, and a very bright, keen look, for an old

woman, glancing out from the eye-holes of her veil, and looking a laugh, she hurried off with the cosmetic leaves. A cataplasm of those, pounded, forms the *henna*, which applied cold to the nails of the fingers and toes, imparts to them that bright pink tinge which, by the oriental woman, is accounted such a beautifier.

I had wandered about for some time—now among shrubberies devoted to rank herbs and neglect—now with difficulty forcing a passage through parasite plants and over dismantled stones; when at length I found myself at the bottom of a flight of stone steps that led to a deserted space, still surrounded by pillars and falling walls. It had probably been the *godshun*, or flower garden, of a neighbouring palace: and choked up fountains, reservoirs where water once had been, and weeds and rubbish filled

all the place. I sat down on a broad stone that was placed invitingly beneath a pomegranate tree, and in the darkening nature of the hour and spot, almost excluding the light of day---found a strange charm that was not entirely free from a species of awe. I had not been long lost in that aimless reverie, which, in moments of lassitude and loneliness, sometimes seizes on us, ere I became aware of a humming sound which seemed to arise from a cavernous abyss behind me, the mouth of which was thickly covered by interlacing plants and the bushy foliage of the custard apple. Turning round, I beheld a faint ray of light stream up from the pit, and crouching among the leaves of the tree, behind the stone on which I had been seated, I peered down into the profundity before me, and saw an old woman, very old, very haggard, very wild of

aspect, employed in some occupation the nature of which I could not at first distinguish. As the light of day decreased around me, and the vision became accustomed to the obscurity it wished to pierce, I could see by the twinkling lamp that burnt beside her, that what I had taken for a cellar, was nothing more than the dry bottom of an exhausted *bowry*, or well, in which, seated on her haunches, the old woman cowered over a fire of *bratties*—dried cow-dung, and sticks; on which was placed a simmering *chatty*, or pot, which ever and anon she stirred with a wooden ladle; muttering the while a sort of indistinct chaunt, which imagination might have readily construed into a witch's incantation. I could only collect a phrase or two, as the words came slowly and gutturally from her

lips, but I felt a slight tremor creep over my frame as I listened.

“It is boiled,” cried she; “the rice is rich with fat from the ribs of my darling. My Sooliman’s blood gives it a brighter tinge than is conferred by the yellow turmeric; and oh! his flesh is sweet of taste, and gives strength to the wasting form of his famishing mother! Sooliman, *janun*—my love,” continued she, her voice rising to a shriek—“why come you not to partake of the feast your delicate body and its healthful juices have helped to provide? Cannot the spirit—the living spirit—feed on the carcase it has heretofore inhabited? I plucked a cocoanut yestermorn, and in its core deprived of sap, there coiled a maggot: it was the spirit of the nut,—the phantom feeding on its confining body! Cannot you, then, eat your own flesh? Why not? The mother who

bore you, who suckled you at her breast when you were living, now feasts upon your dead limbs, and invites your ghost to join in the meal. They said I slew thee, Sooliman, my darling—but they lied! May dogs defile their graves!—Living, I would have died to ensure thy life—but dying, I eat thee that I may live!—Ha, ha, ha! I am the *madur-i-ghowl*—the mother of the ghows! And the wretched creature, bursting into a fearful hysteria of laughter and tears, flung herself on her face, whilst her long grizzled locks crawled like vipers about her uncovered shoulders!

I now remembered the vague warning conveyed to me by the Mendhee gatherer—“that I might perhaps fall in with the Mother of the Ghows if I extended my walk;” and I instantly concluded that the miserable maniac before me was the person

so designated. Startled by the violence of her grief, I moved and in moving displaced a fragment of stone ; which falling down, was the means of recalling her to herself ; and changing the variable mood of her madness, she started upwards, clapped her hands joyfully, and with a loud laugh, exclaimed—

“I have frightened away the hyenas and the jackals : they are afraid of me ; they will not have my savoury *khana* (meal). It is ready.—*Bismillah !*” And after, in a solemn tone, uttering this word of grace, without which no true Mahomedan breaketh bread or drinketh water, she poured out the contents of the chatty on a few banyan leaves stitched together ; and I at once perceived that her banquet—so revoltingly disgusting in imagination, was nothing but, plain rice. On my return to the mosque, I met the venerable Muezzin, or Summoner-to-

Prayers, and in answer to my enquiries concerning the old woman, received the following narrative.

“ Many years ago, when I was a stripling of some nine or ten years of age, the incidents occurred from which resulted the insanity of Hoormut, the woman to whom the Sahib refers, and who is generally recognized by the self-given name of the *madur-i-ghowl*, or Mother of the Ghowls. What I am about to relate is well-known to be plain facts, and I have frequently heard my parents describe the circumstances connected with the poor maniac, who is now in her eightieth year, having survived all her kindred with the exception of a respectable merchant who is very kind to his necessitous and harmless kinswoman. At the time of which I speak, the will of Allah had denied to this country, for two seasons of intense

heat, the usual benefit of the *Buraat*, or wet season ; and a fearful *dookal*—famine—began to prevail, depressing and depopulating the land : for, to the depression consequent on the want of food, exhaustion, disease, and death succeeded : nor were the richest wholly exempt from the miseries attendant on so frightful a calamity, since their gold failed to purchase what was not attainable at any cost. My father was a *sowdagur*—merchant—well to do, and I have heard him aver, that so long as grain of any sort was to be had for money, his means were available to all ; and in general, the opulent, combining their strength of specie, entered into a league of benevolence, economically judicious, to aid the famishing poor. Cattle, dying for want of provender, perished everywhere ; for no green thing latterly pierced through the baked

and sapless earth ; every weed that was known to be hurtless was instantly gathered for food, and many deaths ensued from imprudently partaking of pernicious roots. On one occasion, when expected relief from Bombay failed to arrive, my mother declared that she and her family subsisted for five days on a few *seers* of *gram*" (a seer is about two pounds—gram is a species of pea) "mixed up with the finely ground bark of mango wood. The kernels of custard-apples (*annona reticulata*) were with avidity pounded for meal ; and these, with some lizards, comprised the whole food of a household of ten persons, until grain arrived from the sea. People retired to lonely places, there to gorge on such hideous and revolting garbage as, even with death at their heels, they would have blushed to swallow in public. Many died in secret

crypts and hiding-places, whither they had stolen to conceal their agonies ; and crimes of the most shocking and incredible cruelty were perpetrated in the exciting frenzy of starvation. An old usurer, a noted miser, who would have sold his soul for gold, and who had never been known to give away a copper coin in charity, was found—after the dearth had passed away—shut up among his money-bags, dead, and gnawed by vermin ; whilst beside him lay scattered the limbs of human beings. It was evident that he had fed on the loathsome refuse of the charnel, and perished from the poisonous excess. A woman of respectable family was seen over a scanty fire, stewing in a cauldron the disgusting entrails of a dog, the body of which lay putrid beside her. But to return :—Hoormut was the young, handsome wife of Ali Khan, the favorite

hujam—barber, of Beejapore ; they were a youthful and a happy pair, locked up in their love for each other, and in their affection for their only offspring, a beauteous boy of tender age. For a time they struggled, as did others, with the prevailing calamity ; but an epidemic, arising from palpable causes, broke out among the people, and poor Hoormut became a widow. Whether from the hour of Ali's death insanity took possession of her mind, or not, is not known ; but she was seen soon afterwards with her wasted boy, her dying Sooliman, sitting beside an old tomb, devouring some wretched offal, with which in vain she tried to feed her child. Two days afterwards rain fell heavily ; grain, too, came in from Poona, and my father went in search of Hoormut. He found her—but *how* found he her ? Alas ! in her little cabin he found her,

seated beside the hacked and hewed corpse of her boy ! One limb, suspended by a string, was roasting before a huge fire,—the others lay scattered before her, and she herself—sole queen of this sad kingdom of despair—was singing aloud, in the deplorable exhalation of incurable madness ! No portion of her poor child's body was missing, so that the dreadful food had not entered her lips, and it was concluded that he had died a natural death ; but in the wild fits of her frenzy, she is accustomed to accuse herself of having slain and eaten him, calling herself by the strange and appalling title of

“ THE MOTHER OF THE GHOWLS ! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

BEDER.—THE DANCING GIRL'S WELL.

FOR a whole happy week I lingered among the ruins of Beejapore, during which time I lost sight of my friend the Fakeer. I neither felt weary of my solitude, nor met the wrinkled visage of ennui in my path. Wandering through the dismembered walls of fallen and falling palaces—piercing into every cavernous archway—climbing the sinister staircases of towers and minarets, fast toppling to decay—examining ancient tombs,

and often meeting, in my excursions, the harmless *Madur-i-Ghowl*, I led a peaceful *far niente* life, that was a quiet oasis in a stormy existence. I had at length, however, issued orders for a removal, and all was in preparation for a start on the following day, when Ibrahim Sha entered the mosque, where I was seated reading Lallah Rookh, and fancying myself, in the exuberant vanity, of youthful excitement, Feramorz, and every other in succession, who pleased me in its pages.

The Fakeer, in answer to my enquiries regarding his playing truant, said that he had been visiting the villages and families in the neighbourhood of Beejapore, according to annual custom ; and that he intended to depart for Beder on the next day but one ; “ where,” added he, “ the Sahib will see an ancient city and fort worthy of notice,

and moreover behold the *Almai-Goomta*, or Dancing Girl's Well !”

“ And who was the dancing girl ?” asked L. But the question was not answered until we were beside it, for I accompanied my reverend guide to Beder, and was charmed with the trip. In this province, the junction of the three languages, the Telinga, the Mahratta, and the Canarese, take place ; but the Hindoostani continues to be the current dialect. Under the ancient Hindoo government it contained an immense population, but it is now thinly inhabited in comparison with the British provinces : along with other Deccany districts, it came under the Mogul dominion towards the conclusion of the seventeenth century, during the reign of Aurungzebe ; from whose successors (as we learn from Ferishta) it was separated in 1717 by Nizam-ool-Mulk, and has ever since

been possessed by his posterity, the Nizams resident in Hyderabad.

I found the fortified city strikingly standing in an open *mydan*, or plain ; the eastern part of it being built on a rising ground, while the whole is surrounded by a wall, which is five miles in circumference. My leave of absence from head quarters was however drawing to a close, and I looked forward with regret to a return to pipe clay and gunpowder, after a season of liberty. I had still ten days before me, and the last evening I passed at Beder was in the society of the fakeer, who, in accordance with his promise, told me the story of

THE DANCING GIRL'S WELL.

Already had the city of Beder been besieged by the forces of Ram Raja, the Hindoo

sovereign of Bijanuggur, for a space of time that subjected the exhausted and enfeebled inhabitants to all the horrors of famine. The expected reinforcements from the friendly Ismael Adil Sha, reigning prince of the neighbouring province of Beejapore, came not ; and the heart of Ameer Bereed sank within him as he witnessed the increasing misery, which he could so sparingly alleviate in the now reduced state of the public stores.

In this awful emergency, however, disaffection still kept aloof from the brave and faithful bands that defended the walls of Beder. Every man felt his courage grow with the growth of the very calamities which threatened him, while his fortitude increased, as each reiterated attack of the infidel invaders upon the fortress that held his household, failed to make any impression on its strong and well-defended ramparts.

Even the wives and mothers of the besieged threw off, as if by mutual agreement, the timidity of their nature ; adding their exhilarating voices to the war cry that kept alive within each bosom the fire of determined resistance. The bolder spirits, within the precincts of the harems, assumed a cheerful tone of encouragement and hope, whilst the more gentle and delicate silenced the fears that appalled them ; and, with that submissive self-control and quiet fortitude which are so often observed, in seasons of peril, to inhabit the breast of woman, repressed every emotion that might tend to agitate or enervate their defenders. But already Famine approached with hasty strides, and frequent victims to death in its ghastliest guise filled every heart with dismay. The poorer classes, it is true, received a daily dole from the richer, the

resources of all being thrown together to aid in alleviating the prevailing evil ; but scanty were the portions which, in the almost total exhaustion of provisions, could now be distributed ; and in this direful extremity, the starving populace had recourse to the most loathsome and disgusting substitutes for food ; for nauseous vermin, reptiles, and weeds of the most deleterious qualities, were unhesitatingly appropriated to allay the deadly cravings of their hunger.

But to the deficiency of food, a still more horrible want, if such is possible, was now about to be added—that of water. The tank within the fort which, with a few niggardly wells, had hitherto supplied them daily with a stipulated measure of water—distributed under the superintendence of a guard stationed over it—began to fail them.

A scarcity of this necessary of life had ever been the curse of Beder, and in times of drought, water was carried from distant streams and tanks, to furnish the requisite supply. The monsoon had long been over, and, as the heat of the weather increased, each hour might be calculated on as reducing the capabilities of the solitary tank, and the almost exhausted wells.

In the heart of the city resided the favourite court *Almáh*, or dancing girl—a young female of surpassing grace and beauty. To a disposition of the most feminine sweetness, Amina joined an energy of character and enterprize of spirit that would have done honour to a throne ; and, during the siege, she had taken an active part in administering to the comforts of the distressed. Her generous and untiring charity was confined to no rank or caste ; but, like the dew

that falls equally on the palace and the prison-house, was extended to all ; whilst her resources, which were immense, were never spared to purchase food for the hungry, when it was to be had for either gold or gems : and now, when neither pearl nor pésa could procure a handful of rice or a lota of water, she moved among the troops like a ministering angel, encouraging them by her smiles, reviving their drooping energies by her songs of hope and triumph, and not seldom hurling, with her own delicate hand, the javelin from the wall, which carried defiance if not death into the ranks of the infidel. But the distress which now prevailed was such as shook even the sanguine mind of the Almáh. Her mansion was filled with women and children, all of whom, in their sore extremity, had sought her for that sympathy, which was now her sole substitute for more

tangible assistance ; and now that her own resources were completely exhausted—now, when she had fasted for two days, that she might furnish a handful of bad grain to an old and faithful servant, her heart began to fail her.

It was a still and sultry night. The shouts of the insulting foe had for the time ceased to vex the ears of the miserable besieged ; and, to escape from the groans and lamentations that converted her dwelling into a lazar-house of dismay, Amina, wrapping herself in an ample *chudder*, (sort of white linen mantle) stole out into the silent streets. Almost unconsciously she found herself at the entrance of a ruined Pagoda, whence the sounds of a wailing voice seemed to proceed. Common as such sounds had become in a city where death held high festival, they fell on her ear, in the general still-

ness of that moment, with such intensity of piteousness, that she stopped to listen. Neither did she forget that she had reached an obscure and remote part of the town, where this last relic of what had once been a Hindu temple of great magnitude, was permitted to moulder away, an object of execration and scorn to the Moslems ; who as they passed, contemptuously spat at the crumbling walls, which seldom now admitted a secret worshipper.

The sounds still continuing, the adventurous Almáh determined to enter, and on the very threshold stumbled over a human body : it was stiff and rigid, and Amina's blood ran cold as she stepped over the ghastly barrier into the interior. At the farthest extremity of the edifice she perceived, by the glimmering light of a little cresset, the gaunt and disgusting image of the goddess

Kali. The Mussulman woman shuddered at the sight—but a still more terrible spectacle awaited her. At the base of the idol knelt a wild and squalid female, in whose withered arms struggled a wasted and wailing infant. The mother's eyes glared fiercely around her, as the sounds of approaching footsteps fell upon her ear.

“Nay,” she cried, in a husky whisper, which, as she proceeded, turned to a demoniac scream,—“it is but the wind : there is not even a bat alive in this city of the accursed ! My husband lies dead in the temple of our angry gods—our dog has died, and I have eaten of his flesh. It has maddened me ; fit punishment for such deadly sin ! For thee, squalling imp !” and she violently shook the wretched child ; “for thee what is there in this dried-up fountain, to quench thy thirst ? The Goddess Kali

bids *thee* minister, from thy puny viens, to appease that of thy parent. Then, be it so !”

And the frenzied wretch, in the fury of her fearful craving, would have satiated its unhallowed demand with the blood of her offspring, had not Amina darted forward, and in a commanding voice exclaimed—
‘ Forbear ! execrable creature ! wouldst thou slay the innocent fruit of thine own womb ?”

She would have released the babe from the grasp of its savage parent, but the unconscious child—startled at perceiving a stranger—clung the more closely to its mother, twining its little arms about her neck, in hushed and trembling terror. That simple act seemed as a spell to exorcise the evil spirit that had taken temporary possession of the woman’s mind ; and, clasping

her baby to her breast, the unfortunate creature burst into a violent but salutary passion of tears. Oh! it was a touching sight to see that poor emaciated child sucking, in its agonizing thirst, the very drops that trickled from its famished mother's eyes!

The Dancing-Girl knelt down beside them, spoke to the mother, and cheered her with words of kindness and encouragement—even though all hope had expired in her own bosom. Suddenly a thought darted across her soul, like a flash of lightning through the darkness of a dungeon. "Follow me," she cried; "follow me to the house of Amina, the court *almah*."

* * * * *

Four years had just passed, since the only

living relative of the Dancing-Girl, an aged aunt, had expired. In her last moments, dismissing her attendants from the room, she beckoned her niece to approach ; and in a tone and manner so like the aberrations of insanity that, until now, the words never reverted to the memory of Amina, she spoke as follows :—

“ A day is coming when thou shalt hunger, yet have not wherewith to eat ; but the stomach can do without flesh when the liver becomes a cinder through thirst. The diamonds of thy nose-rings cannot be melted into water, nor of the silver bells of thine anklets canst thou make one grain of dāl.

“ In that season of sore distress—when thou enterest the house of the heathen, and findest thirst yearning for its own blood—then, but not till then, raise the third stone of the steps that descend into the secret cell

beneath this chamber, and drink—*drink !*”

It is strange than these words, which were the very last that issued from her kinswoman's lips, had never since struck upon the recollection of Amina, and the very suddenness with which they now presented themselves to her memory—as if by a prophetic spell—filled her mind with a delirium of hope. She reached her habitation, agitated by a thousand feelings that, for the time, made her existence a fever ; and summoning a few of her most faithful retainers, she sought with lighted torches the spot indicated by her deceased relative. To what a pitch, then, were her expectations raised, when she discovered that the third stone of the steps was moveable ! in fact, it formed a slab, covering a flight of steps, which terminated in a low passage cut in the rock. Fearlessly did the undaunted

Dancing-Girl leap down into this subterranean and dreary place, while even her trusty vassals hesitated to follow. Amina, however, creeping on hands and knees, with a torch in her left hand, was the first to advance on this singular expedition ; and undismayed by the accumulated filth and rubbish, that soiled and tore her garments,—or the peril she incurred from scorpions, or reptiles still more venomous, she cheered her followers with words of encouragement.

“Alla ! Alla !” cried one,—“it is the seventh entrance to Jehannum !” (the seat of eternal punishment).

“It is the palace of Eblis,” whispered another.

“*Ai, Beebee ! mut jao*”—“Oh, lady ! do not go !” muttered a third ; “it is the cavern of the Ghowls.”

“*Kamoosh, namurd !*”—Silence, coward

—said Amina, as in stretching forward the hand which held the torch, it struck with force against a loose projecting stone, on which she had placed her wrist. Yielding beneath her weight, the fragment of rock fell ; and she would have been precipitated with it to an unknown depth, had she not quickly flung herself back upon her terrified domestics ; but, in the exertion, she dropped the torch, which, with the stone, fell down—down—until she heard—

“ Oh ! Alla ! is it indeed *water* ? ”

“ *Bismillah !* ” exclaimed her vassals ; “ it is Shytan’s voice ; he has swallowed the torch, and there is only this other left.”

“ God is great ! ” ejaculated the joyful Almah ; “ it is water ! ” She tore off the magnificent *bangle* (bracelet) which bound her wrist, every gem of which would have been a chieftain’s ransom—and dashing it

down into the dark chasm before her, listened breathlessly for the repetition of the welcome sounds.—It was indeed water !

There is little more to be said, and that little is of prosperity. The Almah instantly acquainted the Vizier and principal Ameers with her discovery, and immediate measures were taken to render it, what it became, a fountain of deliverance. It was an ample and constant spring of delicious water, which placed under proper restrictions served to supply the whole city of Beder for six days ; at the end of which period the long expected forces of their ally from Beejapore, who had meanwhile contrived to put the famishing besieged in possession of some provisions, arrived in sight of the walls ; and ere another sun had set, Beder was no longer besieged ; the troops of Ram Rajah having been routed with fearful slaughter by the

victorious army of Ismael Adil Sha. Honours and rewards were showered on the courageous Amina ; and when, after many happy years, she died, a noble mausoleum was erected over her remains. The spring she discovered is still the finest in Beder, and continues to be called

“THE DANCING GIRL’S WELL.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE REVENGE OF THE RANEE, AN EPISODE
IN THE LIFE OF A MARHATTA PRINCESS.—
THE FALLS OF GOKAUK.—JEALOUSY.—
SONNETS.

And now I was to part from my respected friend, Ibrahim Sha, who found it necessary to extend his pilgrimage to Jaulna and Dowltabad. I asked him, as we sat together beside a ruined shrine on the morning of our projected separation, to point out the nearest rout to Gokauk, where I knew there was a beautiful water-fall—the frequent and

favourite resort, during holiday-time, of pic-nic sabalterns in search of game and glee. health and hilarity. He gave me the requisite directions, adding—"When the Sahib passes through the town of Jumkhundy, which is about thirty miles hence, and within two *munzils* of Gokauk, he will observe to the right of the town an ancient *mahal*: it was the palace of the celebrated Ranee of Jumkhundy,—a princess who possessed the form and face of a houri, the masculine power of a giant, and the heart of a demon. Nothing now remains but the walls to hint the former grandeur of this mighty mansion; but the bones of the skeleton show that they did not belong to a dwarf, and the noble workmanship, exquisite carving and chiselry—still worthy of remark—will prove that even the fierce

Marhattas had artisans of skill among them."

"Is there not current a strange anecdote of the Ranee's revenge on a supposed rival?" I asked.

"Oh, sir!" said the Fakeer, "there is no end to singular anecdotes of the Ranee Radha; but the one to which you allude is perhaps that of the Dancing-Girl and the Mogul."

"Another Dancing-Girl?" cried I.

"Another, but a less fortunate one than Amina!"

"I pray you, tell me the *nukkul*—story—my kind friend; it will be your last for many days!" Alas! it was—but I must not anticipate. The obliging Fakeer complied, relating to me, though not in the following words, this abbreviated incident in the life of a Marhatta Princess.

More than a century ago, Jumkhundy was under the sway of the Rana, Sunkul Rao, who had, for purposes of state policy, espoused his cousin, the beautiful Radha—whose charms were the theme of all the Marhatta *bhats*, or bards, from Poonah to Madras. No eyes darker than hers flashed mirthful fire from behind the *ghoongoot*, or veil, with which—to say true—she seldom cared to curtain their matchless brilliancy. No form, more light and gracefully symmetrical than hers, ever moved in stately dignity through a palace. No hand than hers more delicately moulded, nor yet more dexterous to guide the snorting courser in the chase, or to fling the well-aimed javelin at boar, or bear—at hunted animal or hated foe. No heart than hers more versed in all the skilful manœuverings of human subtlety—more full of voluptuous desires—more

apt to engender serpent-thoughts of dire revenge, when irritated or offended. A wilful and spoilt creature from early childhood, she became the wife of the amiable Sunkul Rao for no nobler purpose than to fulfil an object of political expediency, and to gratify the desire she experienced of exercising authority over a subservient court.

Ambition was the stimulating principle that urged her to bestow her wealth and person on one whom she despised for his tameness ; but, that passion once satisfied, a stronger took possession of her, and the most unbridled licentiousnesses were encouraged in her privacy ; while many young and gallant paramours successively occupied her hours of secret dalliance—some of whom were exalted to sudden dignities, whence the most trivial caprice of their arbitrary

sovereign banished them ; while others, who had rashly spurned her advances, or excited her jealousy, disappeared from the court and were never again heard of.

Among the train of courtiers that waited on the young Prince of Beejapore, who, for the adjustment of some political misunderstanding, had arrived at Jumkhundy on a visit of ceremony to the Rana, was a young Mogul, high in favour with his royal master, and sprung from a noble stock. Azim Khan was in all external attributes the flower of the Beejaporean court ; nor was it long before the Ranee Radha particularly distinguished him by her attentions. He was constantly invited to the *Durbar*, (levee, or council) asked to be her escort in all hunting or hawking excursions ; and, on one occasion, when the other courtiers were aloof, and the steed of the Mogul, suddenly stum-

bling, flung him to the ground, the Ranee threw herself—at the risk of her neck from her spirited Arabian,—embraced him, raised him, and finding that he was considerably hurt, would not leave him till her *sowaree*—retinue—called to her side by a blast of the bugle that hung from her girdle, arrived to render assistance. Here began—but here did not end—an amour which, as it was the most powerful and lasting she had ever cherished, was also destined to taint her soul with the blackest guilt.

The young Khan was not free from the vanities of youth, and the errors of a fashionable life. He was flattered and pleased with the marked predilection of the Princess and when his royal master returned to Beejapore, telling him that in accordance with the request of the Ranee he was permitted to remain for sometime longer a guest at

Jumkhundy, under the title of Envoy from the Mahomedan Court, it was natural that the infirmity incidental to gratified pride should excite a disposition, in itself vain and exacting, to commit repeated acts of insolence and coxcombry, frivolous and offensive enough to disgust and irritate the Marhatta nobility ; who were indignant to see themselves neglected, sometimes insulted for a beardless youth of a different religion. Azim Khan had enjoyed the sole privilege of the Ranee's affections for some months, ere the Rana—enlightened by perhaps some secret foe of the Mogul—became conscious that his honour was in danger of being compromised by the woman whom he feared more than he loved. Although weak and feeble of character, he yet remonstrated with her on the subject : loud words were heard in the ante-chamber ; but it so fell

out that, on the ensuing night, Sunkul Rao was seized with sudden illness, and expired in strong convulsions—not without suspicions of poison.

The Ranee was now “alone in her glory ;” —at the head of a flourishing district, and in undisputed possession of Jumkhundy. For a long time, even for some years, it is affirmed, this heretofore capricious woman continued enthralled by the handsome Mogul ; who, during that period, made unto himself many enemies ; an art in which court-favourites, then as well as now, seem to be proficient. But his career was hurrying to a close, and over his head hung by a single hair the sword of the destroyer !

The festival of the Hooli—that carnival of the Rajpoots and Marhattas—was being celebrated at Jumkhundy ; and among a troop of Nautch-girls from Ahmedabad was

one whose superlative beauty, graceful action, and bool-bool-like voice, drew upon her the admiration of all who witnessed her exquisite attitudes in the dance, or listened to the musical fascination of her songs ; Azim saw her, and felt that now indeed he loved for the first time in his life. The proud and voluptuous charms of the Ranee ceased to move him, spelled as he speedily became by the gentler and more feminine attractions of the young and blooming Zoolika, whose heart and body—all dancing-girl though she was—were pure and stainless.

The powerful are never in want of auxiliaries to forward their most difficult desires ; and what lock so intricate as to resist the influence of a golden key ? It is no wonder, then, that the young envoy soon found means to obtain a private meeting with

Zoolika. His passion was returned with an intensity that—to do him justice—was appreciated. For the first time he felt and recognized the ennobling influence of a genuine attachment ; and his manners and habits mellowed and mildened under the sweet, the purifying sunshine of repaying love. Happy were they, for a time ; yet alas ! not altogether happy, since their interviews were necessarily stolen, their embraces clandestine, their endearments interchanged at rare intervals, and their very lives menaced by the danger of discovery !

For a few months all went well ; but Azim Khan's former arrogance had created some enemies that were not to be conciliated by present amendment of manners ; and among them was one who, narrowly watching his conduct, discovered the intrigue that was going on, and gloated on the prospect

of revenge. Suffice it to say, he revealed his discovery to the Ranee,—half repenting the act as he witnessed the terrible burst of passion that ensued. Her vengeance was deep—direful—deadly ; but she brooded over it in silent and concentrated thought. She permitted no outward sign to escape her of the knowledge she had obtained—binding her informant by the most appalling oaths to silence ; but with a show of greater fondness than usual for Azim, she dispatched him on a mission of peculiar importance to Beejapore, requesting him to return at the end of four days. He dare not disobey, nor during his absence could he find means to hear from Zoolika—the faithful attendant who had been their sole confidante, was ill and unable to aid him. But four days are not very long, even to lovers, and howsoever long, will pass ; so that at length he is once

more within the walls of Jumkhundy. His arrival announced, he was summoned to the presence of the Ranee, and was astonished to find himself ushered into a gloomy and ill-furnished apartment, hitherto unknown to him.

Seated on a musnud, the Ranee, waving the usher from the room, beckoned Azim to draw near. As he knelt to kiss the hem of her robe, a long wail of agony—the feeble, yet heart-rending utterance of one in the very throes of a painful death—struck upon his ears. He started—and looking up an enquiry... beheld the features of Radha hideously distorted by a fiend-like laugh.

“What is that, my Princess, and why this horrid expression of mirth?”

“I laugh to see you appalled by the music to which I have listened with rapture, during your absence ;” cried the Ranee, in

discordant accents. "Put your ear to the foot of the throne," continued she, "and you will better hear a voice whose melody is dear to you."

With a thrill of foreboding fear he obeyed, and then...piercing through a tube which ascended from below and was attached to the musnud...the groans and cries of a soul in its last struggle struck upon his ears, like a whip of scorpion stings!

"What means it?" he cried, the blood in his veins curdling under the chilling horror that grew within him. "Is the Ranee mad?"

"She *was* mad," exclaimed she, "to give her love to the son of the circumcised; but the eyes of the *faithful*" (and she accentuated the word with a sneer) "must be rewarded for their fidelity, as well as their ears. *Dekho!...behold!*" And pulling aside a

panel of the platform on which the musnud rested, she revealed to view, far below them, a narrow court-yard...walled round but open to the skies above. In this gloomy place, slanting downwards from the dismantled turret-chamber in which they stood, the wretched Envoy beheld the perishing form of Zoolika...extended on her back weighed down by heavy chains, and in a state of almost complete nudity ! The most hellish tortures, common amongst Asiatic races, had been resorted to ; but Azim, in his soul's blind anguish, did not at once discover all the extremes of punishment that had been inflicted on his beloved one. A cooler observer might have seen that the unfortunate Dancing-girl's naked body—exposed to the sweltering sun—had been smeared with honey, in order to attract the myriad legions of insects, wasps, gnats,

beetles, and even more hideous creatures, with which, at all seasons, the atmosphere of India abounds. That they had done their dreadful work was apparent: her pearly body was scarcely visible from the swarm of noxious creatures that—humming and buzzing around—covered it, save where, here and there, the broken and devoured flesh showed blood. The death-froth now gathered on the lips, whence ever and anon—each sound weaker than its predecessor—came faint shrieks of pain; and glaring from the ghastly eyes shone the visible spirit of coming death.

But Azim saw not all this: his brain whirled round—he was mad—and with a leap, he flung himself upon the Ranee;—but her satellites were at hand—in another moment the body of her paramour lay strangled at her feet; and the last rattle in his throat

mingled with the moan that burst from the tortured Zoolika, as she resigned her spirit to Him who had bestowed it !

* * * * *

“My walk, this morning, “so runs my journal, on the fourth day after leaving Beder,” was a short one of some six miles, when I came upon the large town and fort of Gokauk ; where, without stopping, I crossed the Gutpurba river, and ascended a steep ghaut to the pagoda in front of the waterfall. The ghaut was difficult to ascend and led to the cascade, which is about two miles from the town. I am now sitting in the small but antique, classical-looking, romantic pagoda, on the summit of the high and wild precipice; the cascade—a few paces distant and soothing me with its murmurs—is at its lowest season of glory, seeing that the hot weather has long set in...and consequently my first glance at

it might have expressed disappointment ; yet the longer I gaze, the more beauty do I discover, both in the fall itself, and its scenic accompaniments. During the rains, however, the Gutpurba, which forms this superb cat-
aract, is about 169 yards broad, and the whole volume of liquid element falls perpen-
dicularly 174 feet. From the brow of the promontory, whence the sheet of water des-
cends, the deep dark abyss boiling at the bottom of the cliff, and in which myriads of enormous fish are constantly to be seen dash-
ing up and down...like perturbed demons of the flood...has a sombre and inspiring effect. Those fish are under the protection of the Brahmins, and by them fed, are held sacred. A few paces from the fall I was shown the print of Mahadeo's footsteps, on the very edge of the rock, where (it is said) that deity stopped for an instant, in a flight over Doab

—thereby rendering the surrounding ground holy. As I stood upon the gigantic foot-marks, cut deeply in the stone, the spray from the tumbling waters fell upon me like a gentle shower. All the circumjacent scenery is peculiarly suited to please the lover of sylvan solitude ; a series of grotesque precipitous alps, clothed with trees and shrubs, whence you look down upon long cultivated tracts of meadow-land on the banks of the river, is studded here and there with little pagodas, shrines, and stone-idols of all styles of imaginable hideousness, smeared with ochre and red paint : a few mango groves, just beyond the ghaut, or pass, give a touch of civilization to the otherwise savage landscape—quickly banished, however, by troops of gibbering monkeys that skip about from rock to rock.

“ I am revelling—absolutely revelling in

mélons and grapes ; for Gokauk is celebrated for these delicious summer fruits. For a seer (a couple of pounds) of the sweet green grape I pay four pice (about three pence) While for the large, luscious, black *Habshee* ...or Abyssinian grapes, I give but a couple of pice more.

“ On the morning before I left my temple-home on the cliff, within sound of the waterfall, I was aroused at early dawn by the hum of congregated voices, and on summoning Malliapah, was apprised that the clamour was occasioned by a crowd of people from the town, who were thronging round the *dumduma* (cascade). Springing from my couch, and undrest as I was (though let me spare the feelings of my English readers by telling them that in India we sleep in wide muslin or calico trousers, tied round the waist by a cord and tassel run through the

band), merely slipping on my *paposhas*... slippers...I ran towards the group whom I saw on the peak, and found that it was a melancholy duty on which they had flocked thither so early. A woman, the wife of one of the most respectable tradesmen of Gokauk, in a fit of jealousy had fled from her husband, and flung herself from the top of the cliff. I accompanied them in their search, but we had not far to go. The unfortunate creature had missed in the darkness the salient point whence the water pours its perpendicular volume, and flung herself down a part of the rock full of craggy peaks and jagged pinnacles. She had not been missed for some hours, but as she had on former occasions threatened self-destruction by leaping from the cataract, the first search of her husband and relations was directed to that spot. We found her quite dead, and cold,

and dreadfully mangled. Her face was undistinguishable, for she had fallen on it ; but I was told that she neither possessed youth nor beauty, and that her temper was over shrewish and peevish ; while her husband was considered as being a man “ more sinned against than sinning.”

“ That I did not altogether cease to worship the Muse during my stay at Gokauk, will be evidenced—with what success I know not...by the following sonnets :—

I.

Beneath the shade of this wide-spreading tree,
I love to watch the cascade tumbling near—
Refreshing with its murmuring song the ear,
While misty moonbeams glimmer silently
Within the falling flood—seeming to be
Enamoured of its foaming course. Pale Fear
Amid these frowning rocks retains her court ;

And blear-eyed Danger, and wan care resort,
Their favorite homes in these wild scenes to rear.
—Hark ! heard ye not a sound of thrilling woe
Float on the quivering pinions of the gale ?
Or was it some sad bird of night, whose wail
Pierced the affrighted air, telling a tale
Of suicide, upon the mountain's brow ?

II.

Still let me sit and watch the waterfall
Throwing itself, like raving-mad despair,
Down from this giddy height—and howling there
In that deep dusky pit, as if to call
The midnight spectres to their vigils. Now
Visions of wild distorted fancy weave
Their fitful spell around the wayward breast :
Methinks the spirits of the waters grow
In dewy shapes before me, rudely drest
In dank weeds of the deep— while loudly grieve
The demons of the waste, or murky cave ;
And elfins of the mine, that harshly rave,
Appear in red and lurid clouds, that shed
A fiery halo o'er the mountain's head !

III.

There flits a lighter shape—a form most fair ;
And intercourse with such a goblin-train
As yon dark crew, she flies with proud disdain,
Sporting with many a whirl within the air,

Which fondly seems its beauteous freight to bear.
It is a Peri-maid, decking her brow
With ocean-gems that sea-nymphs' pillows share,
And fragrant flowers in Fairyland that grow!—
She waves her snowy head, and that dark crew
Sink in the bosom of the fearful earth
Which groans to welcome them as if the birth
Of some dread earthquake rent its womb with pain ;
And now within that wreathy cloud of blue
She sweetly sings her melancholy strain !

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST DAY OF MY LEAVE.—AN OLD
PUTHAN'S OPINION OF THE FAIR SEX, AND
AN ANECDOTE OF AN ARABIAN WOMAN.

PLEASANT things are holidays!—green oases in the desert of toil—halycon-nests amidst the turmoiling waves of occupation, where no other bird builds or broods—aloe-flowers that bloom but once a century;—though here, indeed, the fabulous usurps the true, nor would it be well in these my random re-

cords to specify as a fact that which is, in fact, a fiction. For who, now-a-days, seeing that the botanist has been abroad, knows not that the aloe-plant has its annual flush of blossoms in common with its other sisters of the field and fell and hedge ?

Pleasant things are holidays !...midsummer ice...winter warmth...light in darkness...the pure fountain's lymph to ardent thirst !...To all and each of these may holidays be compared ; and, yet, were life to be but one long holiday, how tiresome would it become !... how "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable !" The bruised, and beaten, and starved slave, of our factories and mines, who has a painful lease of that existence which has been thrust upon him without his own volition, has but *one* equal in the annals of tedium...and that is the wholly unoccupied man. Almost more pitiable than the British factory slave (for

England...the noble, the generous, the *Free*... has its brutalizing bondages, its serfs, who wear the badges of their degradation in scars and maims on the naked flesh)...is he who, in complete idleness, passes a life of aimless inutility to man, and uselessness to God, he whose mind, inert and sapless from the repletion of indolence, construes existence into a load, and makes it a sin...for idleness is crime, and crime a burthen, the *heaviest* ! The antagonism between constant drudgery and endless indolence is not inferior to that which exists between happiness and misery ; yet both are alike in the hurtfulness of their effects ; both possess in common the upas like quality of destructiveness ; both equally dwarf the faculties, enervate the body, and deprave the soul ! The hot and burning fever, is it less deadly than the slow and mining consumption ?

But a holiday is a pleasant thing...a genuine holiday, gathered from the busy harvest of employment, and healthfully indulged in for a given space ; and therefore I was somewhat sorry to find that mine was almost at an end, and that for perhaps years I could not again enjoy the indulgence of a month's exemption from the monotonous duties of a garrison life. I had invited a few of my brother officers to come and spend the last day with me, *al fresco*, at Lokapore ...a pretty, retired village within some ten miles of Head Quarters ; and my breakfast table, enlarged in its compliment of matutinal fare, was easily laid out under an immense *Bair* ... or Jujube-tree...in the garden of a worthy cultivator, who for a small douceur had let it to me for the occasion. But lo ! as I stood...like sister Ann looking for comers,... up came coolly after

cooly, bearing notes, apprizing me of the inability of my expected guests to come to me. Taynton was very ill with a sore throat (influenza had not then come into vogue), caught from a bath in a bowry, while heated with hard riding after a pariah dog. Bowen had got a fit of the lumbago, no doubt occasioned by extra "exercise" of some sort.* Phillipson had sprained an ankle in leaping or endeavouring to leap, over a dozen piled muskets with the big drum perched on the top of them ; while poor——had got tipsy——no unusual feat with him ; and incurring the displeasure of the commandant in consequence, dared not apply for leave.

Thus, condemned to disappointment, I consoled myself as best I could, by swallowing a double portion of *dhuen* and raspberry jam ; the former being a delicious prepara-

* *Kawaced* Hindostani ; "Exercise"—drill.

tion of curdled milk,—acid, cooling, and refreshing ; which achievement concluded, I lay down with a book, on a carpet spread for me, beneath the tree,

“ O'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous roof,
A hanging dome of leaves and canopy sun-proof.”

And thus I wiled away the hours of heat till my tiffin of hot vegetable curry, and cool grapes, conveyed from Gokauk, having been finished—not neglecting the siesta for digestion—forth I fared to inspect the mud cabins and kitchen gardens of Lokapore.

Little indeed found I there, worthy of a second glance : the houses were all alike—small, humble, if not mean ; the bazaar containing merely a few *dookans*—shops—of grain, spiceries, and oil, with one or two

punsaries ; for no East Indian hamlet, however small, is without its *punsari*, or dealer in drugs, dried herbs, hulwas, &c. One or two old women were frying cakes of maize, or of millet, in a composite of *ghee* and *jaggaree* ; the former being clarified butter, the latter a coarse species of sugar—not unlike treacle in the lump—extracted from the inspissated juice of the palmyra tree. Many were cooking, under stray trees and beneath the eaves of their hovels, their evening refection—plain boiled rice, a little curry of fish, or meat, or vegetables ; but generally the women were employed outside their dwellings in spinning, weaving, (and their simple and primitive looms, *en plein jour*, are not without a touch of the picturesque) or here and there seated on their haunches, busily grinding flour for the week's consumption, by means of those original handmills.

that are no doubt the heir-looms of the Mosaic time. The gardens were equally humble, but looked fresh and green from profuse irrigation ; nor were trees and bushes wanting. Yet, indeed, they contained nothing but beds of vegetables and pot-herbs—patches of the foetid coriander plant, the green leaves—which are eaten as spinach—smelling strongly of bruised bug, from which it is frequently called the bug-plant, while its seeds are delightfully aromatic ; fenugreek, anise, cumin, and carraway ; the seeds of all of which are indispensable to the composition of curry-powder. Here and there, a ridge of *huldee*, the turmeric plant ; a bunch of ginger, with its fleur-de-lis looking leaves ; a tuft of the delicious-scented lemon-grass, of which a *tisan tea* is made ; a few flowers, chiefly African marigolds, balsams of every dye, and the gorgeous

and odorous *mirabilis jalapa*. In one garden I noticed a young girl busily picking the buds of a large bed of moogra bushes ; which, having collected, she sat down in her fragrant lair, and with a needle and thread began to fashion them into graceful chaplets : these wreaths, made of the unopened buds of the moogra, or Indian jasmine, are preserved through the night in damp leaves, or cloths, and next day carried to market ; where they are eagerly bought up—sometimes for ornament or perfume, but oftener to place before an idol, or to lay upon the tomb of a dear one !

I wandered about for some time in the outskirts of the village, until at length, because—like the stars—I had “ nothing else to do,” and was wearied of exploring the lanes and alleys around me, that were all so like each other,—I sat down on an old wall

which seemed the remains of a building of larger dimensions than the generality of those in the village.

“Salaam, sahib!” cried a voice behind me, startling me by its suddenness, for there were no habitations close at hand, nor had I observed any person near me. It was a grey-bearded old man, shabbily dressed, who was crouching in the rear of the ruined wall, and occupied in weaving a coarse net

“*Koun hie ?*” cried I—“who is that?”

“*Poorana sipahee koun, khawind!*—I am an old sepoy, Master.” And he went on to tell me that he was a Puthan Mahomedan---had served with credit in one of our native battalions for many years...and was now leading a quiet pastoral life on his pension.

“You have a family?” asked I.

“I have had one,” replied he; “but

there are none with me now, except my son-in-law, who lives in yonder house beside the tope, and who is the proprietor of all the fields adjoining it. I have six boys in the company's service, and two others were killed in it, at Asseerghur."

"Are your children kind to you, father?"

"*Al-hoomdoolilla!* Yes, thank God! they are good Mussulmans. My daughter takes care of my old age, and truly...considering that she is a woman...she is not a bad creature of her kind."

The old man said this so gravely that I could not help laughing aloud.

"You are not an admirer of women, then," said I.

"They are our mothers, and our sisters, and our daughters, sahib, and truly that is all the good I can say of them."

"They are also our wives."

“I did not include the wives, sahib. Women are a wily and jackal-like sisterhood ; and though in the eighty-five years I have lived I have studied them well, and had three several wives, I never yet could comprehend them, nor unriddle the enigmas that compose the character of the sex.”

“But there are exceptions, my friend.”

“There are exceptions, my prince, among limes ; we have the sweet ones, and the sour : but I never heard of any in lemons...they are all acid. There never was more than four perfect women.”

“And who were they ?”

“Asia, the wife of Pharoön (Pharoah), who for her belief in Moses, was by her husband put to the fiercest tortures ; which she supported with rare fortitude, until the angels pitying her, carried her up alive to Heaven. Kadija, the Prophet Mahomed’s

wife ;...Fatima, his daughter ;...and Mariam, the Virgin-Mother of Issa." (The Virgin Mary).

" You have read, I see," cried I.

" I read the Koran, and the Deewans (works) of the poets, Sadi, Hafez, Wully, and Sowda."

" It is not from the poets that you have taken your opinion of woman."

" No, sahib. I read the poets with the eyes of my imagination, looking for pleasant illusion, and finding it. I read mankind with the eyes of reason and experience."

" Did you meet falsehood, then, at the hands of your wives ?" was my next inconsiderate question.

" Sahib," was the reply—" the grass grows over their three graves, and of the dead the best praise is silence. But, upon my head and eyes be it ! I never yet knew

a woman that did not glory in deceiving man. In my youth, Khawind, I was cast ashore upon the Nicobar islands, and there the barbarous inhabitants have a *misul*—proverb...that man was made by a *Deo*...deity...out of a lion and whale, but that woman was composed of a snake, a cat, and a shark."

" Might not a young wife take care of your old age ?" demanded I.

" Such care as the wolf takes of the kid—the falcon of the quail ; or as the Soonar's wife, over the way, took of her old spouse a week ago."

" What was that ?" I asked, anxious to encourage the veteran's gossip.

" Oh !" replied the superannuated chatter-box, " she was buxom and young, and the *Soonar*—goldsmith—was at least half a dozen years older than myself ; but who so

proud as he of his young portionless wife ? None so kind as she, none so devoted ; and when he was ill, no one could act the nurse like her. But, ya Mahomed ! one night he came home, after an absence of two days ; and she was so glad to see him that she would fain have hurried the old man to bed, supperless, in the dark—for he found her without light of lamp or lanthorn, and she pretended that she loved to sit alone in the dark, to think about her absent darling. But the Soonar was hungry, and struck a light before his wife could prevent him ; but wah ! wah ! who should he see, cowering close to the wall where the lamp stood, but Seetul Persaud, the young Shikar—hunter ; and, wonderful to behold ! the youth had neither *lunghoti* or *Kummerband** on his person !”

* Articles of dress.

I could not help laughing as I asked what the Soonar did with his faithless wife.

“ Why, sahib, he slippered her out of the house ; but she left the marks of her ten nails in his face ; and report says she is now at Darwar, living with the young Shikar. Had she been *my* wife—but *shookur Oolla* (thank God), I never was guilty of eating so much filth at the hands of any woman.”

I told the pensioner that he ought to have been a story-teller, for that the anecdote he had related would have exactly suited the Persian work, which was composed by a learned Moolla to put the uninitiated on their guard against the artifices of the fair sex.

“ If I had leisure,” said he, “ I could give more than one additional evidence of the guileful nature of females ; and I would commence by telling a story that proves of

how little use such wise books are, as are written for the express purpose of warning men against women. No panoply is of power sufficient to withstand their darts—no armour strong enough to repel the artillery of their fascinations ;—as the philosopher of Bagdat's adventure in the desert can testify."

" Pray let me hear it !" urged I, seeing that the veteran only waited for my mandate. The Putthan, making a low salaam, cleared his throat, and continuing his netting, thus began :—

" During the reign of the Caliph, Haroun Alrashid, it became the fashion among the dames of the seraglio, and at last amongst all women near the court, or who pretended to be fashionable, never to accept of any gift, or article howsoever trifling, without saying the word—" *Baccalum* "—we shall

see It did not signify whether the thing was given in jest, or in earnest. Sometimes this diverting folly would last for weeks, for the fun of the game was to succeed in conferring something on a person without that person's recollecting to utter the signal-word of acceptance ;—and this triumph entitled the winner to anything he chose to demand, while the loser was compelled to pay the forfeit.

“ Now there lived at Bagdat a sage man, who had passed a life-time in studying the idiosyncrasy of the female sex ; and in composing a treatise regarding it—consisting of all the tricks, intrigues, artifices, and plots, played off by them on the male portion of the world, from the earliest times up to the present day. This manual he constantly carried about his person, as a safeguard against their wiles. One day

in his travels across the desert, he found himself close to the encampment of a sept of Arabs. A young woman, seated beneath a date tree, arose suddenly at the approach of the pilgrim, and invited him to refresh himself in her tent, and he complied, not deeming that any danger was to be apprehended among the unsophisticated and hospitable dwellers in the desert. The young Arabian's husband was absent, and the wearied philosopher had scarcely rested himself on the soft carpet and cushions placed for him by his kind hostess, ere she brought him some fresh dates and a goblet full of goat's milk ; neither could he refrain from admiring the rare perfection of the hands which offered him this simple repast ; but having satisfied his hunger, and finding that in spite of himself, his eyes kept wandering to the beauteous Peri-faced lady be-

side him, he pulled out his book and began to read ; for he found that there might be peril in the presence of even a Daughter of the Desert, and began to fear a snare.

“ Piqued by his conduct, the seductive creature exclaimed ‘ Your volume must be very interesting, since it seems to be the only thing that fixes your attention. Will it be an indiscretion to enquire what science it treats of ? ’ ”

“ A science beyond the comprehension of woman,” returned the philosopher gravely.

“ This answer but the more excited the curiosity of the Arabian. She advanced the prettiest little foot that had ever left its fugitive impression on the moveable sands of the desert, and leant forwards towards him the most bewitching head that ever graced the neck of woman. The philosopher’s eye being downcast, he first saw the foot—and

the sight gave him strange distractions, his glances, strongly excited, began to ascend to the swelling bosom and cypress waist—until at length his ardent looks mingled with those that were directed towards him by the gazelle-eyed lady. Leaning over him, until her scented locks struck upon his cheek, she asked him with a voice that was like the sweetest notes of a thorn-pierced-night-ingale—"What is the book?"

"A work of which I am myself the author;" replied he: "it contains a full account of all the artifices and tricks ever invented by womankind."

"What *all* of them?" asked the daughter of the desert, with a sly smile.

"Yes all. It is only from the intense study of your sex that I have at length learnt to regard them without apprehension.

I feel that I am now proof against their arts."

"Indeed?" said the Arabian, letting her long silken ebony eyelashes fall for a moment and then raising them suddenly, she gave the philosopher such a glance as made him forget his book and all its contents.

"Suffice it to say that the sage, perceiving that the young lady seemed more than half willing to play the intriguante with him, hazarded a declaration of love. How could he help it? The sky was blue—the desert in the distance glanced like cloth of gold... the evening zephyr brought passion on its pinions...and the Arabian dame appeared to reflect all the ardency that surrounded her, while her humid eyes...as they replied to his tenderness...encouraged the avowal. She had in fact almost dropped into his arms, when suddenly starting up, she exclaimed :

“ We are lost! my husband approaches !
He is as jealous as a tiger. In the name of
the Prophet hide yourself in this coffer.”

“ In truth, the gallop of a steed was
heard ; the frightened author, seeing no
other resource, crept into the coffer, when
the woman, shutting down the lid upon him,
locked it and took out the key.

“ She, then, ran out to meet her husband
...welcoming him back with some of those
piquant caresses that are so apt to render a
loving husband the most docile viped in the
world. As he sat down, she threw her arms
around him, saying :

“ ‘ I must tell you, *janum*, my soul ! a
funny adventure which has happened to me ?

“ ‘ I listen, my Boolbool ;” replied he,
crossing his legs comfortably beneath him,
and fondling her hair.

“ ‘ There came here to-day,” said she, “ a

sort of philosopher, who pretends that he has collected in a huge *kitab*...book---an account of all the stratagems and contrivances by which women are in the habit of cajoling and cheating the masculine race.

“ *Bhulla*—well ?”

“ Well, do you know, after telling me all this, the lying rogue had the impertinence to make love to me.”

“ *Zeada che ?*” what more ?” cried the husband, looking firebrands and javelins.

“ ‘I listened to him,’ continued she, with great *sang froid* ; “ he was young, pressing, and—in short, you arrived just in time to succour my yielding virtue.”

“ At these words the Arab sprang upon his feet, fierce as a lion, and with a loud oath drew his dagger.

“ ‘Fatima,’ cried he, “if you would spare your life tell me where is the traitor.”

“Pretending to be startled by the rage she had amused herself by provoking, Fatima flung herself at her lord’s feet, and trembling under the glittering blade, she indicated the hiding-place of the philosopher by a single look, as prompt as it was eloquent. Then arising covered with blushes, she drew the key from her zone, and presented it to her husband ; but just as he was going to unlock the coffer, the malicious girl burst into a loud fit of laughter. The amazed Arab stood confounded, looking at her with a strange sort of inquietude.

“‘ At last,” said she, dancing round him with joy, ‘ I shall have my golden carcanet. Give it to me, O you silly dear one ! for you have taken that key from me which I presented to you, and which I freely bestow on you since you have forgotten to say your

"Baccalum!" Another time let your memory be greater and your suspicions less."

"The husband, stupified, let the key fall, and taking the golden carcanet from his neck, offered it to Fatima on his very knees; assuring her that he would give her many more precious ornaments if she would promise him in future to renounce such cruel methods of gaining the *baccalum*. And then, being an Arab, and not caring to lose a gold chain without obtaining something to make up for it as soon as possible, he mounted his steed again, and rode forth into the desert to attack an advancing caravan. No sooner had he disappeared than Fatima, releasing the nearly stifled philosopher from the coffer, said to him very gravely, but with a cunning smile :

" ' Do not forget to mention in your treatise the trick that has just been played.' "

It was dark ere the old Sepoy concluded his *nukke*, and slipping a rupee into his hand, I bade him good night, and returned to my tent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MESS-HOUSE AGAIN—OUR ADVENTURES—
SHAW'S TALE OF A MERMAID—THE ADJUTANT'S PROMISE—A MOMENTARY LEAP TO
THE YEAR 1843.

THE post-prandial party in the verandah of our mess-house, on the evening after our re-assembly, was a sociable one. We were glad to meet each other again, glad to rehearse our several exploits and individual adventures; and our worthy commandant entered heartily into the festivity of the

scene—playing alternately the parts of inquirer and listener, until our evening “*cause*” became so prolonged that he fairly ordered an extra turkey-grill and a capacious bowl of punch to wash it down, by way of post-liminary banquet. Our party was yet incomplete, two of the absentees having obtained an extension of leave ; nevertheless we formed a right merry conclave, as we sat discussing our doings of the month, smoking our tobacco in the several different forms of hooka, meerschaum, hubble-bubble, sheroot, or cigar :—I myself being the only individual in the group that—in the absence of Captain Crowe—was cursed with King Jamie’s aversion for the balmy weed. I had been listening with considerable relish to an account of an amateur theatrical performance at Bangalore, recited by Coxe, who assured me my services, amongst the *corps dramatique* of

that gay and delightful station, as *prima donna*, were abundantly missed. Nor let the uninitiated reader cock up the ears of doubt, as the eyes of astonishment rest upon the words—*prima donna*, (though, in truth, *primiere actrice* would be the more proper designation, seeing that our ambition did not extend to operatic effects). In our dramatic representations in India—a very favourite recreation at all large stations—we are obliged, in the dearth of professional ladies, to confer on obliging young gentlemen the somewhat unsatisfactory and unsatisfying responsibility of assuming the stays and petticoats; and through a long career of amateur acting I have been doomed to wear the bustle instead of the buskin, to shave off my redundant whiskers, and to practise the graceful curtesy, and the fan-manceuvre, with limbs and hands better

fitted to perform "the extensive motions," and the platoon exercise.

"Ah, Rob!" said Coxe, "happy were those days at Bangalore, when the theatre there, under the able management of Brunton and Bowers, was *the* Drury Lane of the East!"

(Alas! as now I write, in 1843, Bowers is with the dead, and Colonel Brunton, then of H. M. 13th light Infantry, one of the most talented actors I ever beheld on any stage—is I know not where. And good right had he to don the sock and buskin with a grace, for he came of the old Brunton stock—was own brother to the Countess of Craven, and I think uncle of Mrs. Yates of the Adelphi).

"Do you remember, Rob, the rich dress of real Brussels lace, which, after having been only twice worn, was bestowed upon

you in return for the pleasure afforded by your representation of Mrs. Ferment, in "The School of Reform," by our beautiful and elegant Lady-Governess, the wife of Sir Thomas Munro?"

"Ah yes!" said I, with a sentimental sigh—"I remember how I wore it as Lady Sorrell, in "The Way to get Married;" and I also remember how it and the band-box to which it was consigned, were carried off by a whirlwind to the top of the new Church, a mile distant, where it was found some hours after, torn into a million shreds. I remember, too——"

"Do you remember," interrupted the Colonel, with a broad grin, "the only *wig* (reprimand) I ever had occasion to give you for being late on parade next morning, and how——"

"How you could not give it for laughing,"

said Bowen, interrupting him in turn —
“ when you saw that Campbell, instead of presenting you with his report as officer of the day, very politely offered you Lady Sorrell’s ivory fan, which he pulled out of his sash.”

A hearty laugh followed this “ *true-bill*.”

“ Well, but tell us, Rob,” said Blanche, “ how many odes have you collected from the lips of the Singing Women ; and how comes it that Ibrahim Sha did not assassinate you in the Jungles, by way of doing Mahommed a service ?”

“ I have not brought back a single sonnet,” replied I, “ for I did not see any Dancing-girls ; and the old Fakeer is a regular trump. Perhaps he spared my life from a faint hope that I may be coaxed into becoming one of the Faithful. But I have

had my adventures, as well as you, although I have not slaughtered so many bustards and bandicoots."

"Bandicods?" cried the buff-haired ensign, whose name was Pozziwinkle—"I understand they are very nice eating."

"Very!" responded Blanche, putting a huge finger knowingly to the dexter side of his nasal organ; "particularly when fried with lizard's brains, dished up with white ants and tomata sauce."

The ensign stared, but detecting a grin gathering round, smoked a hoax, and said—"Ah! I see you are quizzing; but I am getting out of my griffin-hood, and I fancy a bandicock is——"

"As nice a bird as ever moulted," asserted Blanche, "quite as good as blackcock or grouse."

"Nonsense," observed Bowen, kindly:

“ a bandicoot is a gigantic vermin of the rat species ; and if you take the trouble of stepping over to the mess *godowas*—cellars—you will see one which I killed just before dinner.”

“ Nay,” said Pozziwinkle, “ but after all, is there not really an edible lizard ?”

“ Oh, yes !” answered Bowen ; “ it is the guana, a hideous creature to look at—but it makes delicious soup, and the delicate white flesh eats like rabbit. I’ll order some, one of these days ; for they occasionally sell them in the bazaar—and you shall take tiffin with me.”

“ *Yehan to abhi ; gorr-porr his sahib !*—There is a guana here, sir, at present,” said one of the mess attendants, who had heard the conversation, and who, running out, brought in an immense guana, looking as if it were either a giant lizard or a dwarf

crocodile. It was still alive—its ugly claws fastened together by a string. It had been purchased for a few copper coins for the private refectory of the butler, who was, it seems, a connoisseur in such like *gourmandise*: however, with great civility, he offered the untempting-looking game to Bowen, who, thanking him for his courtesy, accepted the boon, including in his invitation to tiffin one or two others, who professed their partiality for lizard broth, I myself being amongst them. Let all those who have not tasted it—having the power to do so—taste it forthwith ; and I err marvellously if they return not to the pleasing treat. Truly, a most exquisite thing is guana soup! *Bè sur-wo chashm*, upon my head and eyes be it!

“I vote that Rob tells us one of his adventures,” said Colbrooke.

“So do I,” said *all* ; and accordingly I

related the discovery of the hand and ring, and the story of Jaffer and the Thugs. This concluded, Pozziwinkle proposed that the newly-joined officers should, each in turn, give an account of some incident that had occurred to them, during their absence.

“ But if nothing *has* occurred to us worth relating,” cried Coxe, “ what is to be done? For my own part, I have done nothing but flirt and dance, and eat and drink, since I left you ; and have not in all my peregrinations stumbled on an adventure of any sort whatever : unless, indeed, I relate how at the last ball at Bangalore, while stooping to pick up a flower dropped by my partner, I unluckily over-stretched myself, and lo ! a most unseemly fissure in the back settlements of my pantaloons became the immediate consequence.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! what did you do ?”

“ Good old Mother Jackson was just behind me, and to my great relief, flung her Cashmere shawl over me ; under which I achieved a dexterous retreat, assailed by the loud laughter of the men, and the suppressed titters of the females.”

“ And I have nothing more to tell,” said Colebroke, “ than that I daily rode over a great deal of ground, and handled a cue whenever I could get at a billiard table.”

“ And I,” said Blanche, “ have killed an immortalizing amount of all sorts of game, from florikin to wild hog, upwards, and one porcupine inclusive—have drank a vast quantity of all kinds of drinkables, water-gruel excepted,—and all without so much as a thorn in my foot or an ache in my head.”

“ Well,” exclaimed dear little Shaw, in his own sweet lisping way, “ I have been

very happy, but met with no adventures ; however, to make up for them, I will read to you a manuscript story which I found in the last bungalow I slept in, and which seems to have been dropt there by some romantic young author."

A smile might have been observed on several countenances, for Harry Shaw was more than suspected of a penchant for authorship, in a small way.

" Bravo !" cried Pozziwinkle,—“ since Campbell has not brought back any odd dancing-girls’—”

“ Dancing-girls’ *odes*,” interrupted I. “ Fie, fie, young man, what should I do with odd dancing-girls ?” and I tried to hide an invisible blush with my plate.

“ A very good move,” remarked the commandant, “ but it waxes late. We muster to-morrow morning—first bugle at five, so

we shall have Shaw's "*trouvaille*," at our next *soirée*.'

Universal "good nights" were said, and we parted; but on the following evening Shaw was reminded of his promise, and pulling out a manuscript, the handwriting of which bore a strong resemblance to his own, he commenced as follows:—

THE SEA-MAID'S LOVER :

A TRADITION OF THE HEBRIDES.

It was during a summer's excursion through the Hebrides that my kind hostess at —, gave me the following anecdote, as a current tradition of the Isles; and while such legends continue to find believing auditors in the humble homes of our peasantry, let no man dare to assert that the poetry, with which the Scottish character is so deeply

impregnated, has ceased to float upon the mountain breezes and seaward walks of a country which is essentially rife in all that feeds the imagination and exalts the fancy.

Flora Sinclair sighed deeply as she beheld herself arrayed in her bridal dress. It was formed of the most splendid materials, yet she permitted her eager and merry attendants to decorate her person with the numerous magnificent jewels which were the gift of her father, almost mechanically; nor knew she, in her sad heart's humility, that those ornaments, in themselves so grand, so beautiful, served to add no new charms to a form moulded in all the perfection of graceful symmetry. Bitterly did she sigh, as her thoughts recurred to the incidents which had shed over the last few weeks a gloomy colouring, such as her young experience had never known, her foreboding never antici-

pated. One month ago, and she was the happiest of the happy ; her betrothed lover, the gay, gallant Macdonnel, had just returned from the wars—his brows wreathed with glory's brightest laurels—eager to lay his heart and fortunes at her feet. Her father, Sir Colin, looked not on his blooming child as on a bale of merchandise, which it was his interest to dispose of to the highest bidder : he did not regard her as the basis on which he might erect a temple to ambition : nor did he mean to sacrifice her in virgin loveliness at the shrine of sordid avarice. No ! he loved her tenderly ; he beheld in her the sole pledge that remained to him of an idolized wife's affection ; and her happiness was his primary consideration.

Young Alpin Macdonnel had been reared up and educated in the neighbourhood : a tender affection had subsisted between him

and the heiress of Dunlethen from their earliest infancy, which maturer years ripened into love ; and as his brave, generous, and amiable qualities were appreciated by Sir Colin, the indulgent father consented to the solemnization of their union at the end of a month. Alpin had no parents' consent to sue for—both were dead, leaving him a limited, but respectable independence.

The bridal morn had arrived, but sad were the changes that had occurred during the short space of thirty days. In that space, Flora had marked, with ill-dissembled pain, a deep melancholy steal over her youthful lover ; he was no longer the sportive and active youth, who flew eagerly after his morning recreations to lay the game he had shot, the fish he had caught, or the flowers or shells he had gathered, at her feet. He was silent, moody, and contempla-

tive ; nor could the caressing tenderness of his affianced win from him an explanation of his altered conduct. His fine manly form, evidently wasting away from the ravages of a mental conflict, became thin and attenuated ; his face was pale, and a wild lambent light played in his eyes, speaking unutterable things of no auspicious import. He shunned the festivities of the neighbourhood, and loved to steal from the castle of Dunlethen, to wander on the sea-shore, or loiter amongst the wild basaltic cliffs that margined the ocean. He avoided his betrothed bride, and if she lavished her innocent caresses on him—if she asked him in soothing accents the cause of his pensiveness—if she assured him he was ill, and implored him to call in the family leech, tears would fill his dark wandering eyes ; he would clasp her in speechless emotion to his bosom, and

rush from her presence to bury himself in the umbrageous solitude of the woods, or to wander on the unfrequented sea-beach.

Conduct so strikingly at variance with his wonted behaviour, could scarcely fail to attract the observation of Sir Colin Sinclair—yet so it was. Declining in strength, and a man of advanced years, as well as convinced of the long and sincere attachment existing between the young people, he noted not the passing scene; while Flora, though heart-sick at the change, was not selfish in her affliction, and spared her aged parent the pang of knowing that misery had fixed its fangs in her youthful bosom.

The castle-bell had tolled the hour of ten, as the the last ornament was added to the fair luxuriant tresses of the bride. It was a large and valuable pearl, which had adorned the head-gear of her mother on a similar

occasion ; and Sir Colin had requested his daughter to wear it for the first time on her bridal morn ; “ for,” said the good old man, with a superstitious feeling more common in those days than now, “ it is a gem that will bring a blessing to the brow it decks.”

Flora was led, pale and trembling, to the altar, by her father and uncle, the Chief of Allanglen ; Alpin Macdonnell was already there—and one quick furtive glance told her that he was as pale and agitated as herself. The service was concluded in silence—she was a *wife*—and almost fainting on the shoulder of her husband, she was conveyed from the chapel. On recovering from her partial insensibility, she found herself surrounded by her women, while Alpin stood beside her, wan, wild, disordered—with such an expression of anguish as struck a death-chill to her heart. Throwing himself

on his knees beside her, he clasped her to his bosom with passionate emotion, and imprinting a burning kiss on her pallid lips, rushed from the apartment.

As he hurried to the cavernous cliffs that beetled over the sea, he muttered the wildest imprecations on his head: "Accursed for ever," he exclaimed, "be the hour on which I first scaled this promontory! and thou, oh most beautiful Mystery! fair and enticing Spirit of the Wave, in whose magic thralldom my heart burns with unearthly fires—art thou, oh! art thou a being of bliss, or some unhallowed shape, commissioned by the arch fiend to tempt me to destruction? But it is in vain to fly thee—my fate is fixed—and I yield to the spell thou hast flung over me."

He stole down the steep and rugged path that wound round the promontory until he

reached a ledge of rock that jutted over the sea, whose turbulent waters foamed below, like howling spirits in the abyss of hell, at the depth of some hundred feet from where he stood : his arms were folded on his breast—his eyes drank in with a strange thirst the expanse before them.

“ She comes not,” he cried ; “ ’tis well. I will shiver the fiend-spell that shackles my energies. I will seek my forlorn, forsaken bride—my first gentle love !”

A deep sigh ascended from the watery abysm. He started, and gazed with the intensity of anticipation ; but nothing was discernible. He leant over the precipice, and a voice of the most plaintive melody—sweet as the fabled syren’s—more harmonious than the tones of seraph-minstrels as they warble hymns of Eden amidst the orient clouds—came floating on the breeze. Still

he saw nothing : his heart beat loudly, audibly, as leaning over the cliff he listened to the following words :—

“ Fly me, fly me, fly and away !
What do you here on your bridal day ?
Your’s is the flood and the flow of mirth
Mine is a grief that is not of earth !
Fly, and away to your blooming bride ;
Leave me to pine on my surgy pillow.
Your’s be the bridal bed of pride,
Mine the cold couch of the tossing billow !

“ Away, away, you have listen’d too long
To the pain of my plaint, to the sigh of my wong
And long will I weep, in my coral cave,
That ever my love to a mortal I gave :
Begone ! for no longer my green hair you’ll see
As I rise on the breast of the foamy ocean ;
Leave me to pine in my agony,
To war with my heart and its strife-fel emotion !

“ Yet I did not think, in our happy hours,
That thus would have perished Love’s glorious
flowers ;
False have you been—but falsest will be
The snowy breast that has lured you from me !
Adieu ! adieu !”

“Stay!” shrieked the infatuated youth, interrupting her; “I charge you, stay! I am not false to thee, oh! bright and dear spirit! I am thine—only thine! Once more arise on thine emerald throne, and bless the gaze of your faithful lover!”

A light bubbling of the water was heard, and lo! on the swelling surge he beheld the mysterious object of his direful passion! Never before had her features borne the impress of such fascinating beauty. Her dark eyes were filled with tears, and as she threw a mournful gaze on her earthly paramour; they resembled two sapphire gems swimming in a vase of liquid diamond, On her rounded cheek the tinge of the rose was fainter than usual; and her long silky ringlets of the brightest green waved round her majestic neck—scarcely veiling the rich swelling bosom beneath them, which panted and

heaved like two animated heaps of new fallen snow. The rest of her delicate body was concealed from sight by the waters of the ocean ; which, as if calmed by her presence, now lay still and waveless as a mirror.

“ Farewell,” she ejaculated—“ farewell !”

“ Never, never !” he exclaimed, wildly.

“ Say, wilt thou not be mine ?”

A smile played upon her countenance ; it was bright as the first beam of the morning when it enters the cup of the night-dewed lily. Gazing on him with upward eyes that spoke the most voluptuous passion, she sang :—

“ Be thine, be thine ? yes, dearest, yes !
I’ll be thy tender bride of bliss ;
And down in my cave of sea-born flowers
We’ll dwell for ever in coral bowers :
Spring from the cliff to the welcoming deep,
And safely shall I my true love keep ;
Safely convey him beneath the sea
To the joys of a love that will endless be !”

Alpin gazed once behind him. What was his horror and astonishment at beholding Flora, pale, mute, motionless as if chained to the rock, standing a few paces behind him on the ledge of the crag ? He stretched out his arms to the Sea-Maid.

“ Pause, for heaven’s sake !” shrieked his bride—“ pause. or you perish !”

“ I am thine !” murmured the infatuated Alpin, as he plunged into the unfathomable chasm beneath him.

The Mermaid uttered a shrill, discordant laugh, as—skimming over the waves with the rapidity of a sea-mew—she clasped her spell-bound victim in her clammy embrace ; and then, twining her long snaky tail, elevated above the waters, around his body, she sank slowly into the ocean, chanting the while the following words :—

" Down in the deep, down, down with me,
The vales of the earth thou shalt never see :
I will keep thee a captive long,
Till another as false has been lured by my song ;
And then will I give thee a feast to be
To the serpent and snail that lurk in the sea ;
Such is the penalty doomed for all
Who leave earthly love for an unearthly thrall ;
Such is the fate that is destined for thee,
To punish thine infidelity !"

When Shaw's voice had ceased to sound in our ears, and he looked up, he found one or more of his audience, if not actually asleep, plunged in that dreamy sort of repose which may be produced by the soothing sounds of a pleasant though monotonous voice—the gurgling of a hookah...and a state of perfect silence after a hearty meal and its accompaniment of well-cooled balmy wine.

" A very correct muster-roll !" stammered Colonel Ferrior, arousing himself with a

snort, and evidently recapitulating in his dreams the military matters of the morning. Then looking round, as we some of us laughed—"ah, Shaw my boy! that is your tale—a very strange one and I heard every word of it, though I confess the mermaid's song made me sleepy." It is more than probable the worthy colonel only heard the first strophe of the sea-maid's chaunt.

"I thought I saw a fresh water mermaid once," said Pozziwinkle.

"Where? where?"

"In the large tank to the right of the town, but on drawing near, I saw horns instead of green curls, and found it to be a big buffalo, immersed to the neck in weeds and water, with its fiery eyes glaring upon me like a dragon's."

"And now, good night, lads!" yawned the commandant; "who is to be our *Nukhul-*

Kuhani-walla—story-teller, to-morrow?"

"I will," said McCally; "and I will tell you a little incident that befell me only the day before yesterday, which will make all your fleshs to creep, and each particular hair to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

* * * * *

Oh memory!—deep ocean of facts!
where roll the pregnant waters of the Past!
—how strange a power hast thou! And
now---as I sit and write in my little cham-
ber---I can scarcely believe that twenty long
years have passed since the conversation I
have just rehearsed took place. Those years--
the incidents that crowded them---arise before
me, not phantom-like and shadowy in the
mist of time, but fresh and new as things of

yesterday. And almost can I imagine that before my tent roll the sluggish waters of the Gutparba river, its banks covered with fields of maize, chowlum, cotton, mustard, tobacco, and the castor-oil plant ; whereas the sweet August air from the sea of Dover, blows in at my window, and fifty steps out of doors will bring me within vision of our magnificent castled cliff—that Castle itself a fortress---that cliff staring over the ever young “old ocean,” as if in national derision of the more pigmy crags on the opposite coast, where *la belle France* looks anything but *belle* through the rising haze of heat; Yea, twenty years have passed, and there is now more silver in my hair than there ever was gold in my purse ; and yet, though a sickly and nervous old man, I have a stir of young blood in my veins that makes me still a boy ; while a voice within me, in no

drunken notes of wassailry, but with a most gentle accent, cries out ...

“Enjoy! be cheerful! for a beauteous world hath God made for thee! Pluck the flowers while yet thou canst, but ’ware the thorns!”

“And, sooth to say, Dover is a fair and lovely place for autumnal tarrying; with its white cliffs...which are not *all* white, for here and there Flora drapes them with a raiment of wild flowers. The bright azure bugloss hangs its bristly arras in bunches close to thick sweet couches of ladies’ bed-straw, yellow and white; while the papilionaceous crimsons blossoms of the rest-harrow, and the purple wild thyme mix their foliage with the golden blooms of the sea-brassica. Many are the “green delights” round Dover!

But I am anticipating.

CHAPTER X.

THE ADJUTANT'S NOCTURNAL VISITOR....SOMETHING ABOUT SNAKES.

"It was very late," said Mc'Cally, commencing his narrative the following evening,—"ere I reached the village where I had settled on passing the night of Tuesday last, and where on my arrival I found that my Lascar had pitched a *bèchoba*—small tent without a pole—for me in a thicket of guava

trees, surrounding a pagoda, and quite close to the house of the head Brahmin, who had civilly permitted the arrangement. Fatigued by a long ride in a hot afternoon, I enjoyed the extempore curry of eggs and *brinzals* (the fruit of the egg plant), which Laloo had prepared for me ; but as the bechoba felt close and heated, and there was no dangerous dew-fall, I made him place my cot outside the tent ; and after smoking a *Trichinopoly*,* whose soothing and unadulterated aroma served to soften down and perhaps destroy the deleterious scent that was wafted around from the numerous blossoms with which a group of oleander bushes near me was covered, I flung myself on my cot, and was just yielding to the soft excitements of sleep, when a most unexpected and unseasonable shower of rain provokingly aroused

* Trichoinopoly is celebrated for its cheroots.

me. The lascar was at my side in a moment, and would have removed the bed into the bechoba again, but preventing him, I made him take the mattress into the corner veranda of the Brahmin's house, which ran along one side of the pagoda, within half a dozen yards of the tent. There, dispensing with the bedstead, I had the mattress and pillows laid down in a clear space which seemed perfectly free from moisture ; and the rain ceasing as suddenly as it began, I fell sound asleep in the cool and gentle air that *breathed* but could not be said to *blow*, around. I might have slept some four or five hours, and a dreamless and satisfying sleep it was ; but certain it is...let sciolists say what they will, and sceptics throw doubts by handfuls on the assertions of metaphysicians...that before I awoke, and in my dreamless slumber, I had a visible perception of peril...a

consciousness of the hovering presence of death !

“How to describe my feelings I know not ; but as we have all read and heard that, if the eyes of a watcher are steadily fixed on the countenance of a sleeper for a certain length of time, the slumberer will be sure to start up...wakened by the mysterious magnetism of a recondite principle of clairvoyance : So it was that, with shut eyes and drowsed-up senses, an inward ability was conferred upon me to detect the living presence of danger near me...to see, though sleep-blind, the formless shape of a mysterious horror crouching beside me ; and, as if the peril that was my night-mate was of a nature to be quickened into fatal activity by any motion on my part, I felt in my very stupor the critical necessity of lying quite still ; so that, when I at last awoke

and felt that as I lay with my face towards the roof, there was a thick, heavy, cold, creeping thing upon my chest, I stirred not, nor uttered a word of panic.

“Danger and fear may occasionally dull the senses and paralyse the faculties, but they more frequently sharpen both, and ere I could twice wink my eyes, I was broad awake and aware that...coiling and coiling itself up into a circle of twists...an enormous *serpent* was on my breast. When I tell you that the whole of my chest, and even the pit of my stomach, were covered with the cold scaly proportions of the reptile, you will own that it must have been one of considerable size !

“What my thoughts were...so made up of abhorrence, dread, and the expectation... nay, *assurance* of speedy death that must follow any movement on my part...I can

never hope to tell in language sufficiently distinct and vivid to convey their full force. It was evident the loathsome creature had at length settled itself to sleep ; and I felt thankful that, attracted by my breath, it had not approached the upper part of my throat. It became quite still, and its weighty pressure—its first clammy chillness becoming gradually (so it seemed to me) of a burning heat—and the odious, indescribable odour which exhaled from its body and pervaded the whole air---so overwhelmed me that it was only by a severe struggle I preserved myself from shrieking. As it was, a cold sweat burst from every pore---I could hear the beating of my heart---and I felt, to my increased dismay, that the palsy of terror had began to agitate my limbs ! ‘ It will wake,’ thought I, ‘ and then all is over !’

“ At that juncture, something—it might

have been a wall-lizard, or a large beetle—fell from the ceiling upon my left arm which lay stretched at my side. The snake—uncoiling its head—raised itself with a low hiss—and then—for the first time—I saw it...saw the hood, the terrible crest glittering in the moonshine. It was a *Cobra di Capello* !”

“Shading my eyes to exclude the dreadful spectacle, I lay almost fainting, until again all was quiet. Had its fiery glances encountered mine, all would have been over; but apparently it was once more asleep, and presently I heard the Lascar moving about, undoing the fastenings of the tent, and striking a light. A thought suddenly struck me, and with an impulse I could then ascribe to nothing short of desperation, though its effects were so providential, I ut-

tered in a loud, but sepulchral tone..." *Kulassi !...Lascar.*"

"*'Sahib !*" was the instantaneous response, and my heart beat quicker at the success of my attempt. I lay still again, for the reptile, evidently roused, made a movement, and its head—as I suppose—fell on my naked arm. Oh, God ! the agony of that moment, when suppressed tremor almost gave way to madness !

"I debated with myself whether I should again endeavour to attract the attention of the *Kulassi*, or remain perfectly quiet ;—or whether it would not be better than either to start up at once and shake the disgustful burthen from me. But the latter suggestion was at once abandoned because of the assurance I felt that it would prove fatal : impeded by the heavy coils of the creature, weak and nerveless from excitement, I could not escape its fangs. Again, therefore, I spoke with

the hollow but distinct accents which arise from the throat when the speaker is afraid to move a muscle :---‘ *Kalassi, chiragh !*’---Lascar, a lanthorn !

“ ‘ *Latah own, sahib.*’ I am bringing it, sir.

“ There was then a sound of clanking metal—light, advancing, flashed across the roof of the veranda—and at the noise of coming steps, lo ! one after one its terrible coils unwinding, the grisly monster glided away from my body ; and the last sounds that struck my sense of hearing were the—‘ *Ya illahi, samp !*’---Oh, God ! a snake !---of the Lascar ; for I fainted away for the first time in my life.”

M’Cally paused : we were all silent. We had not interrupted him with a single comment during his recital ; but now, when he stopped, we all drew breath. The Colonel’s hookah had gone out, unheeded ; Clemons’s

cigar shared the same fate ; even Boddam had left his brandy-panee untouched ; while poor —— had drank off three huge tumblers in succession, scarcely conscious of what he was about. For my own part, I more than once looked under my chair to assure myself that no noxious reptile had there taken refuge.

“ I do assuredly believe,” concluded M’Cally, who, by the bye, was no watery compound of milk and sugar, but a gallant young fellow,—“ that I shall never forget this adventure. When I came to my senses I found my people about me ; for naturally enough, they concluded that I had been bitten by the serpent. But I soon satisfied them on this head, and from Laloo learnt that, as he entered the veranda with a light, he perceived the snake gliding by, swiftly, from off my body ; nor in the general alarm

did it occur to any one to pursue the creature."

"The corollary to be adduced from this," observed Bowen, "is that the Hindoo religion or creed, is a dangerous one ; and the moral is—never sleep in the veranda of a Bramin, or too near a pagoda ; seeing that they who worship snakes, and will not kill them, may suffer their guests to be bitten by them !"

M'Cally's recital led to many anecdotes of snake-escapes ; and I may as well relate here, as briefly as may be, several evidences that came before my own notice of the alarming prevalence of those dangerous creatures in our eastern territories : among them especially narrating three escapes on my own part. I had nevertheless *four*, but the fourth shall be kept for a later page in my records. My first "experience" befell me at Wallajabad, in 1827, some years

after the period of which I have hitherto been writing. Now, Wallajabad—only forty miles from Madras—situated in a rather low, moist, rice-growing country, is notorious for the abundance of reptiles in which it does all but rejoice ; and there for several months I resided with two brother officers, in a desolate bungalow on the bank of the river ; this habitation had from times unknown bore the sinister name of *Snake Hall* ; and in this said “ Hall,” before we had lived three weeks, we had captured and slain thrice that number of the reptiles whence it derived its title. My first escape occurred as I was going one evening to step into my *palkie*—palanquin,—whence sprang from beneath one of the cushions a snake of no mean proportions ; and of a species bearing no favourable character.

On one occasion, we were aroused from our siesta by the loud barking of Tom

Sharp's terrier bitch ; and were surprised to perceive the animal furiously excited, and barking with eyes upturned to a lattice ; on inspecting which, we found its Venetian bars laced up and down by a long green and yellow whip-snake. Another time, Edgar Manning, who was accustomed to sleep with a lamp in his room, was disturbed by hearing a rustling noise amongst some baskets which stood in one corner ; and thinking it might proceed from a musk-rat, or perhaps a bandicoot, he laid hold of a cane that happened to be near his bed, and flung it in the direction whence the sound issued, when a large cobra di capello instantly sprang up, and hissing angrily, retreated behind some bullock trunks. Manning sounded the alarm ; and I, who at the time was ill a-bed, with a huge blister on my side, in my dire panic—for I have always been an arrant coward in the matter of

snakes and all other *reptilia*—mounted with some difficulty a table; and there—doubled up like a hare in its form (for I could not stand)—I remained until such time as the report of the enemy's defeat and death was announced. On a third occasion, Sharp and I were standing at the door, hoping with all our might against hope, that the drill ordered for that afternoon would evaporate in the welcome sounds of "No parade to-day," from the regimental bugle; when, hearing a peculiar chirping noise in a tree close to us, we looked up, and beheld a sparrow fluttering about in a singularly agitated manner; but presently there was a spring towards it from a branch some distance off, and down at our feet fell a tree-snake, with the bird in its mouth—*dead!* This is the only instance of the fascinating power of the snake's eye that I have ever witnessed.

My second escape occurred at Ragapore, in the Northern Division, a lonely place in the woods where I was detached with a company from Ellore, the head quarters of my then regiment, the 43rd N. I. Ragapore, a lonesome collection of huts, in the midst of woods and fields, is notorious for snakes : the first sight that greets the new arrival is—right in front of the low, mean, thatched bungalow allotted to him as quarters, —a simple gray stone—a tombstone—placed there, as he will discover on enquiry, over the remains of a predecessor who—*died from snakebite !*

I had not been two days in command of this outpost before I issued orders for a general onslaught of serpents ; promising a slight reward for every one that was proved to have been killed in the two *compounds* (enclosures) surrounding my bungalow, and an adjoining one in ruins. Immense was my

success, though a general prejudice prevails among the natives that the *nag-samp*, or cobra di capello, takes note of such individuals as are alert in seeking out its haunts for the purpose of extermination, and rests not till revenged on its pursuer. My jemadar, an intelligent Mussulman, declared that he knew several instances of the truth of this superstitious belief, and very gravely warned me against betraying too warm a zeal in destroying this venemous species ; asserting that it invariably retained a *dawa* (spite) against its persecutors.

“I was one afternoon preparing to take my usual ramble, and snatching my cap from the table, where it had been lying on some books, I was putting it on my head when a snake jumped from it, tumbled down my cheek and breast, and fell on the mat at my feet, beneath which it concealed itself, before...in my stupor—I could summon

servant. There, however, it was quickly despatched : it was a small grey snake, with white streaks down the back ; a cobra manilla, and said to be very venomous.

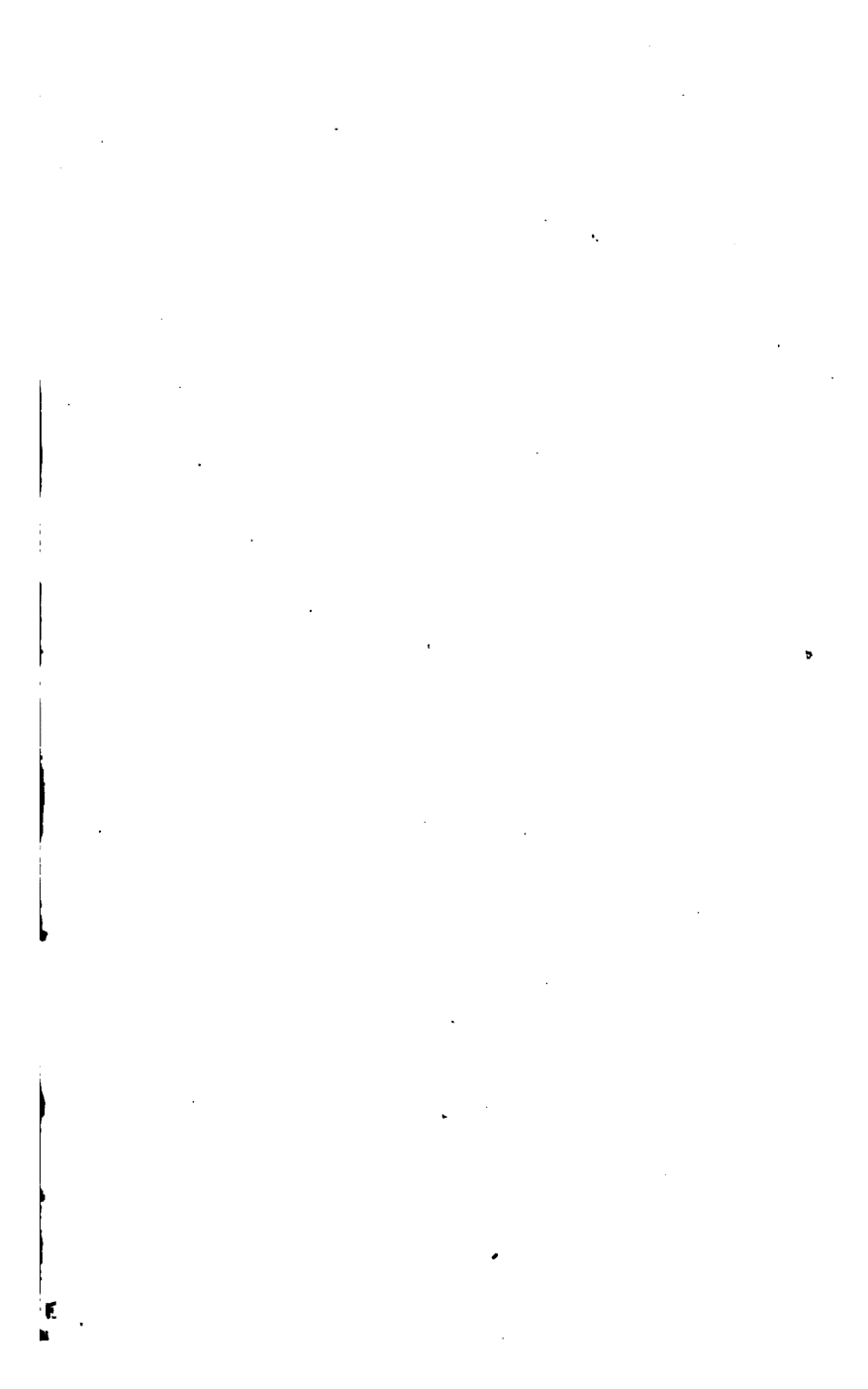
“ My third escape occurred not long after at Ellore, where I had been showing an officer all over my house : about ten minutes after he left me, I had occasion to pass through a small green door, which led into a back bed-room and bath ; just across the whole extent of the threshold was stretched a large snake. I was within a step of treading on it, for the room was dark, and my sight is of the shortest. I could not have missed touching it, had I advanced. It was fast asleep, and gorged...another cobra di capello. After we had killed it, I took up a little religious book---the gift of a dear friend---containing a text and prayer for every day in the year, and looking out that for the day, found these appropriate words :

...“The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” I flew to my ill-arranged diary, and wrote what follows ;...
“Oh how many crowding thoughts arise in my mind as I read the above text! How repeated have been my warnings...how many my escapes...how regardless my mind...how full my soul of sin! What is it that eggs me on thus to do what, when done, makes me hate myself? Want of belief?...want of faith in the power and mercy of the Divine Spirit?...That serpent in my path hath its living likeness in my breast; it is the emblem of a fresh snare gathering visibly around me...of a new idol whom God has preserved me from, and whom I pray Him to preserve from me!”

END OF VOL. I. H.C.

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M.D.





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